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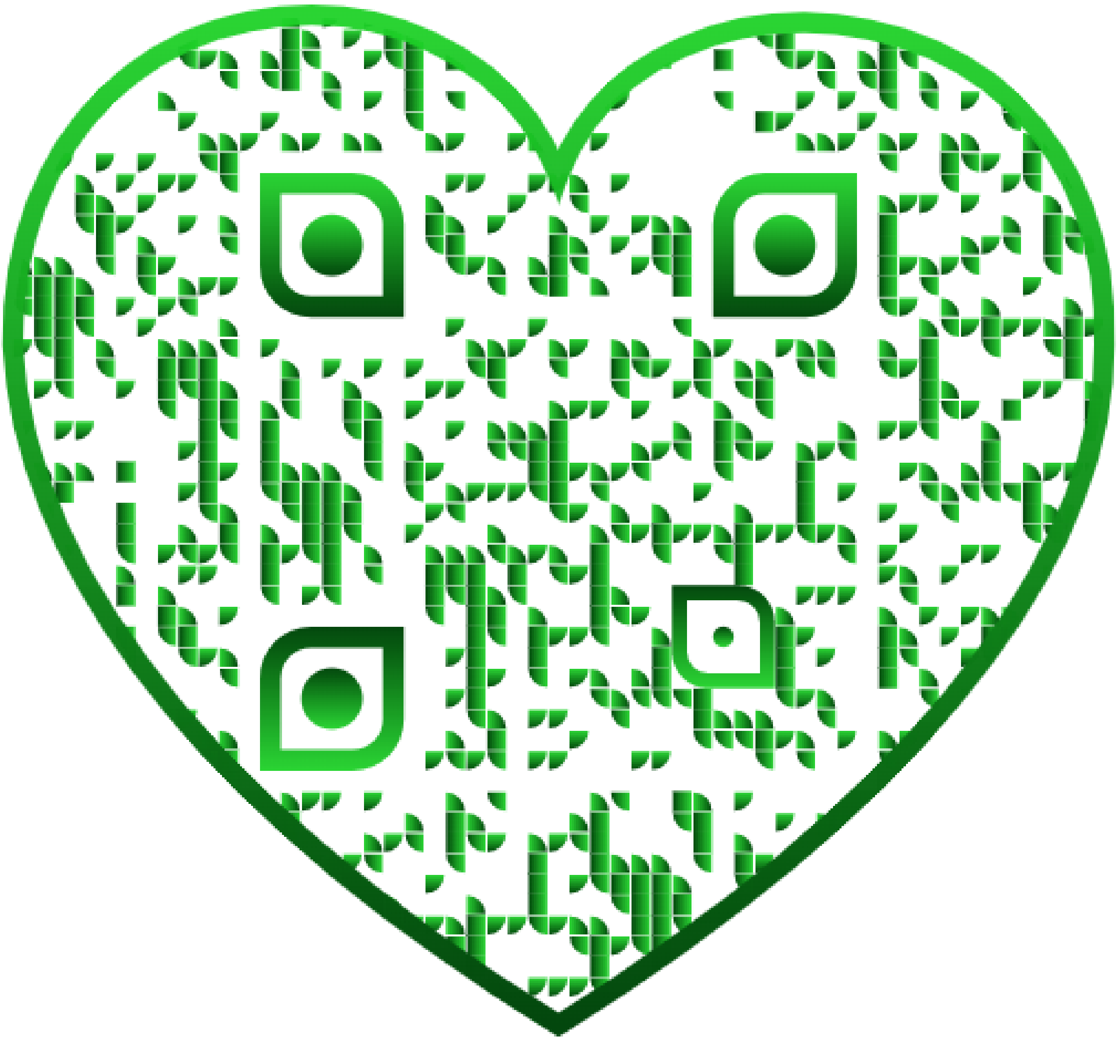

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Funny how things pop into your mind at the most random of moments. Earlier this week I was in M&S picking up something for lunch. When the self-service till showed me my total to pay, it made me chuckle, as the amount was £6.66. And yes, the very first thing that popped into my head were the lyrics to Iron Maiden's *The Number Of The Beast*. I'm taking it as a sign, as this issue we have an exclusive extract from Iron Maiden's *Infinite Dreams* book about the beginning of their imperial era when Bruce joined the band and they became the world-dominating group that we know and love. We also spoke to both Steve Harris and Bruce Dickinson about the early days of the band and how their partnership began.

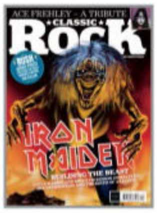
Also in this issue: we venture back to 1990 to hang out with Judas Priest in Marbella to talk about the making of *Painkiller*; we talk to Solstice about being the best-kept secret of English prog; we go back to school with Massive Wagons; and much more.

Shortly before we went to press with this issue we learned the sad news that Ace Frehley had passed away. We pay tribute to the Space Ace from page 20.

Until next month...

Siân

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors

HENRY YATES

Henry Yates has been a freelance journalist since 2002 and has written for *Classic Rock* for nearly two decades now. He is also is the author of Walter Trout's official biography, *Rescued From Reality*. For this issue, Henry sat down with bluesman Stephen Dale Petit for a heart-to-heart as they discussed what sadly might very well be Petit's final album (p42).

PAUL ELLIOTT

The first gig that Paul ever saw was Iron Maiden at the Guildford Civic Hall on February 26, 1981. It was the *Killers* tour, with Paul Di'Anno on vocals. Six months later, Di'Anno would be gone and in his place would be former Samson singer Bruce Dickinson. This month Paul spoke to Maiden mastermind Steve Harris and Bruce about those early days, the origin story of the Iron Maiden we know today (p30).

SYLVIE SIMMONS

Sylvie has been a rock writer since 1977, when she left London for LA and became a correspondent for *Sounds*, *Creem* and *Kerrang!*. These days she writes for *MOJO*. Among her books are biographies of Neil Young and Leonard Cohen and Debbie Harry's memoir. This issue she takes us back to 1990 and to Marbella with Judas Priest (p48). Sylvie is also a singer-songwriter. Her last album is *Blue On Blue*. More at sylviesimmons.com

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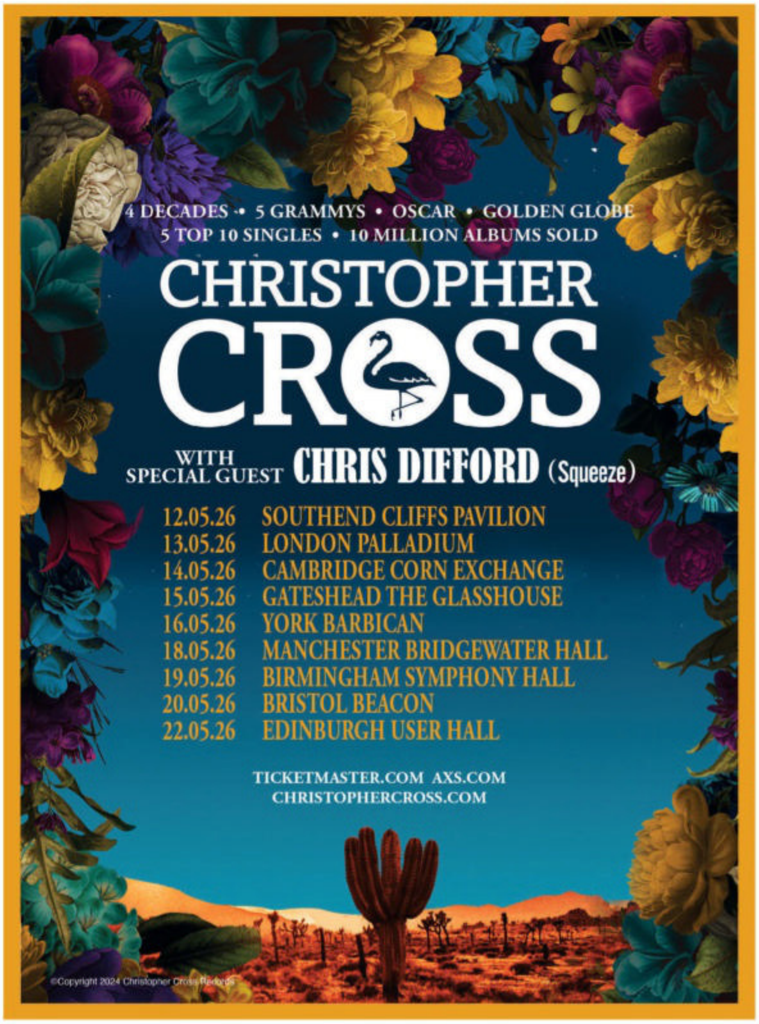

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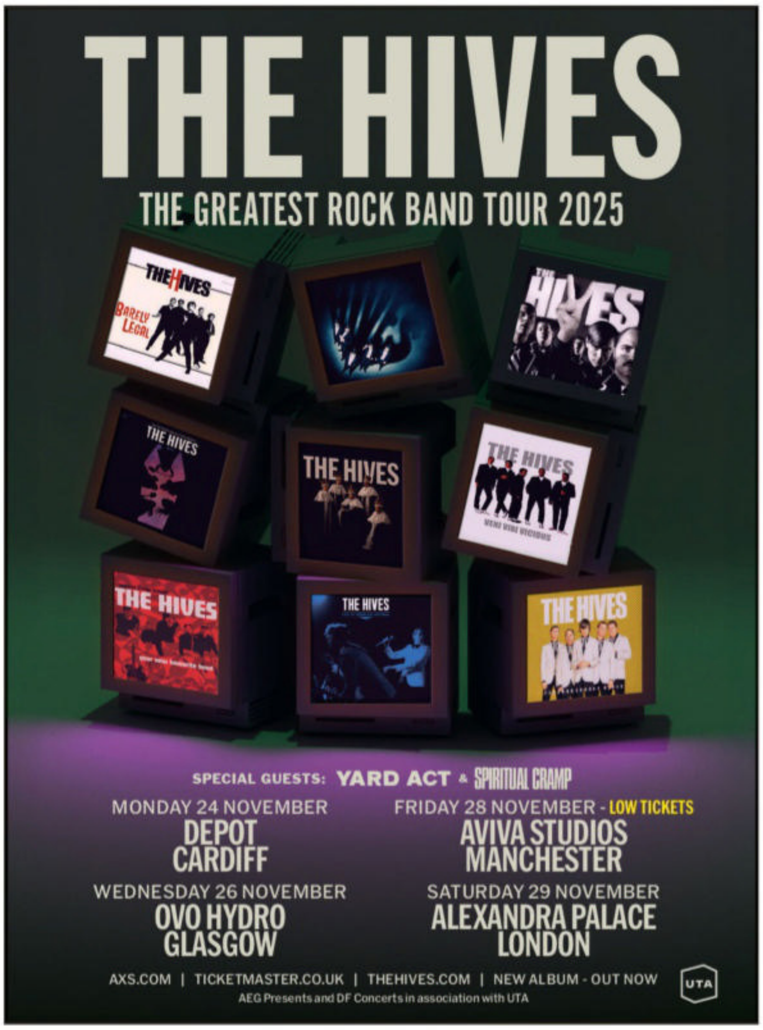

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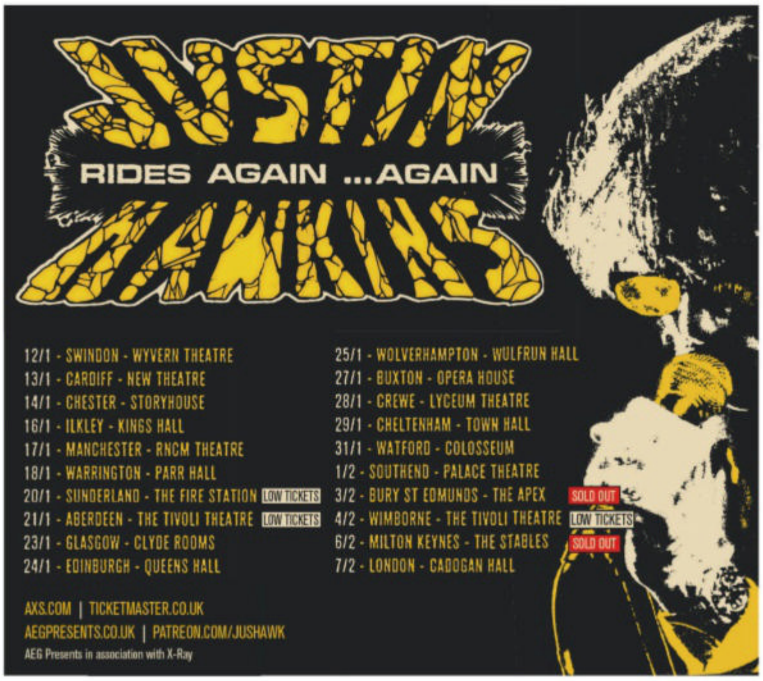

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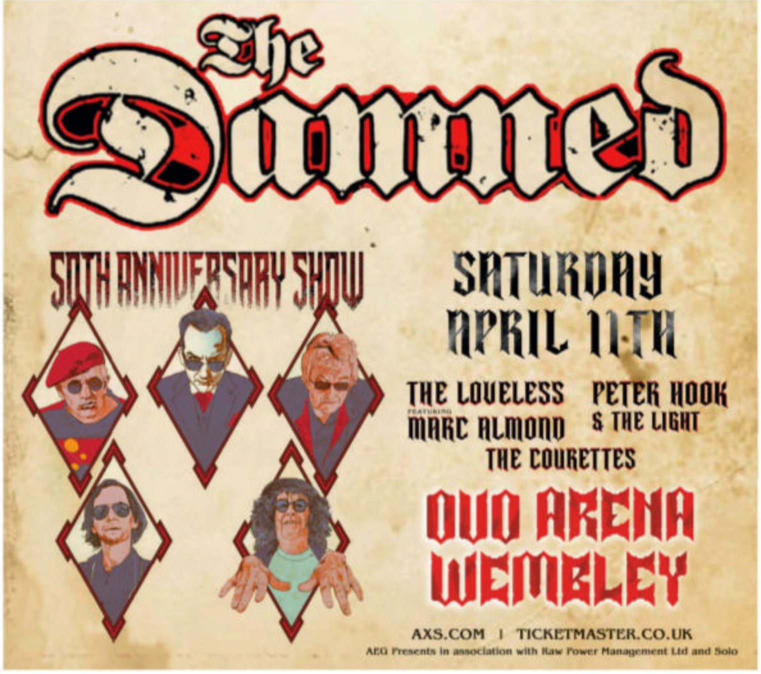

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

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“Life is full of surprises”

Rush return with a new drummer, Anika Nilles.

In one of the biggest shocks of 2025 – or indeed of any year! – Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson have reunited as Rush. For the band’s first appearances since the death of Neil Peart from Glioblastoma (a type of brain cancer) in 2020, the Canadian bassist/vocalist and guitarist will be joined by drummer, Anika Nilles, a 42-year-old German percussionist, composer and producer whose resumé includes more than 60 shows with Jeff Beck. She has also made three solo albums, the most recent of which, *False Truth*, which was released last month.

The unexpected news of next summer’s Rush Fifty Something tour was greeted by a mix of joy and disbelief. Its initial dozen shows – all in North America – sold out so speedily that new dates were added in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Toronto, Fort Worth and Cleveland.

The schedule will begin on June 7 next year at the LA Forum, the venue for Rush’s last show, the final date of the R40 tour on August 1, 2015.

At press time there was no news of European appearances, although given the response to the initial announcement we can only assume (and hope!) that the band will submit to fan pressure.

Billed as an ‘Evening With’, Rush will play two sets per night, with each show featuring a distinct selection of songs created from a catalogue of 35 songs, mixing greatest hits and fan favourites.

The reunion follows Lee and Lifeson’s appearances at the South Park Anniversary Concert in Colorado and at the Taylor Hawkins Tribute events in London and Los Angeles.

As recently as January 2024, Lifeson said that he no longer wanted to go on tour, though clearly plans were being secretly hatched when the pair last spoke to *Classic Rock* earlier this year.

As well as remarking: “I’d rather be remembered for our legacy than returning as the top Rush tribute band”, Alex revealed that he and his lifelong friend still jammed on a weekly basis. “I need to play, to keep my fingers moving. It’s in the calendar,” the guitarist told Philip Wilding.

More pertinently, Geddy stated: “Alex and I jam together once in a while, it’s true. That’s all I want to say about that.”

The tour proceeds with the blessing of both Carrie Nuttall-Peart and Olivia Peart, the widow and daughter of the 67-year-old Peart, a member of Rush since 1974.

“It’s been over ten years since Alex and I have performed the music of Rush alongside our fallen bandmate and friend Neil,” said Geddy Lee in a statement. “A lifetime’s worth of songs that we had put our cumulative hearts and souls into writing, recording and playing together onstage.

“And so, after all that has gone down since that last show, Alex and I have done some serious soul searching and come to the decision that we fucking miss it, and that it’s time for a celebration of 50-something years of Rush music.

“So in 2026, my BFF Lerxst [AKA Alex Lifeson] and I will hit the road once again to pay tribute to our past and to Neil by performing a vast selection of Rush songs in a handful of cities. No small task, because as we all know Neil was irreplaceable.

“Yet life is full of surprises, and we have been introduced to another remarkable person; an incredible drummer and musician who is adding another chapter to our story while continuing her own fascinating musical journey. We could not be more excited to introduce Anika Nilles to our loyal and dedicated Rush fanbase, whom, we know, will give her every chance to live up to that near impossible role.

“Lerxst, Anika and myself, along with many of our longstanding crew members, have been hard at work rehearsing and designing the kind of Rush show you’ve grown accustomed to expect from us. We dearly hope you will come along and help us celebrate our history together.”

Lee was not ruling out the possibility of adding extra players to the line-up, stating: “We also hope to add another musician or two to expand our sound a wee bit and free up Alex and I, in order to show off some of our new fancy dance steps.”

Response to the appointment of Anika Nilles was almost unanimously positive, although she was unprepared for the sheer volume of attention it brought her. “The past few days have been quite overwhelming,” she responded on Instagram. “I want to take a moment to sincerely thank Geddy and Alex for their trust and for welcoming me on this incredible new journey with Rush. It’s truly an honour! Big shoes to fill! I couldn’t be more excited about what lies ahead.”

Lee and Lifeson revealed their plans at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio. “We would joke about it sometimes, and Al was doing other things. I was writing books,” Lee said. “And something happened in the last couple of years that brought us back to jamming in the studio. He would come over and drink my coffee, hang around, jam. We would jam and we would laugh. And then one day, I don’t know why, we started playing some Rush songs for fun. And God, we were laughing so hard and we were enjoying it so much. And it was almost like playing those songs dispelled the dark clouds.

“It was not an easy decision to come to, but this is really the first time we’re talking about it out loud in front of other people. So, yeah, it feels right and we’re going to do it.”

W WAVE
SOUND

WRITERS: FRASER LEWRY, JERRY EWING, DAVE LING. PORTRAIT: RICHARD SIBBALD/PRESS; ANIKA NILLES: RICHARD ECCLESTONE/REDFERNS

This issue The Dirt was compiled by Bill DeMain, Niall Doherty, Dave Everley, Jerry Ewing, Rob Hughes, Fraser Lewry, Matt Mills, Dave Ling, Ken McIntyre, David Sinclair.

RIP

Thank you...
and good night.

Sonny Curtis

May 9, 1937 – September 19, 2025

Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame inductee Curtis was a member of rock'n'roll trailblazer Buddy Holly's band the Crickets and continued to perform lead vocals and guitar with the band after singer Holly's death in 1959. Texas-born Curtis also wrote the song *I Fought The Law*, which was covered by The Clash, Status Quo and the Ramones, among many others. The Crickets played their farewell show in Iowa in 2016, at the same venue as Holly's own last performance. The 88-year-old Curtis died of complications from pneumonia.

Tomas Lindberg

October 16, 1972 – September 16, 2025

Noted principally for his work with death-metal veterans At The Gates, Gothenburg-born Tomas Lindberg was also a member of the Great Deceiver, the Crown, Disfear and the grindcore supergroup Lock Up. The 52-year-old had fought a long battle with adenoid cystic carcinoma, a rare oral cancer. Opeth leader Mikael Åkerfeldt wrote: "You were a pioneering musician, fantastic frontman and singer. A lovely human being! You always had my endless respect."

John Waterhouse

October 6, 1950 – October 12, 2025

Veteran UK hard rockers Demon have announced the passing of the guitarist who played on six of their albums, from *British Standard Approved* in 1985 to 1992's *Blow-Out*. John Waterhouse had recently celebrated his 75th birthday. "John was surrounded by his loved ones," said a band statement, adding: "A massive part of the Demon family, he was important to the band's sound. Sleep tight and enjoy a jam with Mal [Spooner, guitarist, who died in 1984]. Time Has Come x."

Steve Whalley

Died September 2025

Former Slade guitarist and Sad Café frontman Steve Whalley has died following a heart attack. He was the frontman and guitarist with Slade (aka Slade II) during the band's post-Noddy Holder era of 1992–2005. He appeared on their only studio album, *Keep On Rockin'* in 1994, which also featured original member Don Powell on drums. Powell commented: "Steve was a consummate singer and guitarist with a huge passion and incredible experience. We will miss him beyond words."

WORDS: DAVE LING

CHRIS DREJA: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Dreja

November 11, 1946 – September 25, 2025

Chris Dreja, a founding guitarist and sometime bass player with The Yardbirds, and the only musician to have performed on all of their records, has died at the age of 79 following years of bad health.

Born in Surbiton, Surrey, Christopher Walenty Dreja founded The Yardbirds in 1963 alongside vocalist Keith Relf, lead guitarist Top Topham, bassist Paul Samwell-Smith and drummer Jim McCarty. He remained in the band until they broke up in 1968, having played alongside bandmates and future superstars Eric Clapton (who replaced Topham within months), Jeff Beck (who replaced Clapton in '65) and Jimmy Page. Page initially joined in '66 to play bass, but he and Dreja soon swapped instruments, and Dreja continued as bass player with The Yardbirds until they disbanded in '68.

"I wasn't that good on bass, but I had loads of energy," Dreja told *Classic Rock*. "And now Jimmy got the chance to show what a great chord and riff player he was. It was embryonic Led Zeppelin in some ways. I loved that period as a four-piece."

The end of The Yardbirds was difficult. With a run of Scandinavian dates lined up, Relf and McCarty called time and went off to form folk-rockers Renaissance, leaving Dreja as the sole founder member still in the band.

"I wasn't prepared to continue the band without Keith or Jim," Dreja said. "I'd had enough. I wanted to be able to control my own destiny. I was keen to pursue photography as a career, which would enable me to do that."

A keen artist, Dreja had already done the illustration on the cover of The Yardbirds' third album, commonly referred to as *Roger The Engineer*.

In the end, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Bonham and John Paul Jones played the Scandinavian dates as the New Yardbirds in September 1968, and Led Zeppelin were born. Dreja shot the band photo that appeared on the back cover of debut *Led Zeppelin*, and would go on to photograph The Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Righteous Brothers, Ike and Tina Turner, Andy Warhol and many more.

In 1983, Dreja, McCarty and Samwell-Smith formed Box Of Frogs with ex-Medicine Head singer/guitarist John Fiddler and the band made two albums. Beck and Rory Gallagher played on the first, while Page, Gallagher and former Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett played on the second, *Strange Land.*

In 1992 The Yardbirds were inducted into the US Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Although the band didn't perform at the ceremony, they did reunite three years later, when Dreja and McCarty were persuaded to put a new line-up together with bassist Rod Demick and guitarist John Idan.

Typically, the band went through a succession of lead guitarists, including Dr Feelgood's Gypie Mayo, Fotheringay and Fairport Convention man Jerry Donahue, and 22-year-old prodigy Ben King. The guest list on 2003's *Birdland*, the first Yardbirds album since 1967's *Little Games*, included Slash, Brian May, Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter and Steve Lukather. Two live albums – *Live At B.B. King Blues Club* and *Making Tracks*– followed.

Dreja suffered a series of strokes in 2012 and 2013 and announced his retirement from the band in July 2013. His place was taken by original Yardbirds guitarist Top Topham.

"I heard today of the passing of musician Chris Dreja, who passionately played with the iconic Yardbirds, on rhythm guitar and then the bass," Jimmy Page posted on social media. "I hadn't seen him in a while, and I wish I had. RIP Chris." **FL**

Danny Thompson

April 4, 1939 – September 23, 2025

Best known as a co-founder of Pentangle and also as a foil for singer-songwriter and guitarist John Martyn, bass player Danny Thompson has died at the age of 86. Highly popular within the world of rock, Thompson also worked with Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel, Talk Talk, Donovan, Nick Drake, Richard Thompson, Marianne Faithful, Richard Barbieri and many more.

Thompson was born in Teignmouth, Devon, and the family moved to London when he was six years old. After learning guitar, mandolin, trombone and trumpet at school, he eventually settled on the upright bass. Replacing Jack Bruce in Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated in 1964 enhanced Thompson's reputation, and he even featured on the session for the theme for the popular animated sci-fi TV series *Thunderbirds*.

In 1967, Thompson, guitarists Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, singer Jacqui McShee and drummer Terry Cox, formed Pentangle, blending folk, jazz and more progressive inclinations to much success over their first six albums, before the original line-up split in 1972.

For much of the 70s, Thompson played with John Martyn in a partnership that was as formidable musically as it was for its reputation for wild living. "Of all the musicians I've come into contact with, Danny has taught me the most… particularly about style and jazz technique," Martyn said of Thompson.

Thompson released his first solo album,*Whatever Next*, in 1987, and in 2007 he received two BBC Radio 2 Folk Lifetime Achievement Awards, for both his work with Pentangle and his services as a solo musician. **JE**

Thommy Price

December 9, 1956 – October 10, 2025

Described as a "drummer's drummer" by those who knew him and played alongside him, Thommy Price has died at the age of 68. The New Yorker played with Joan Jett & The Blackhearts and as a member of Billy Idol's band. As a sought-after session musician he worked with Blue Öyster Cult, Steve Lukather, Ronnie Wood, Roger Daltrey, The Psychedelic Furs, Deborah Harry, John Waite and Mink DeVille.

In a statement, Joan Jett's backroom team said: "We lost a member of the Blackheart family – the one of a kind Thommy Price, a legendary drummer who was a Blackheart for four decades."

Billy Idol wrote: "Thommy was a fantastic musician and drummer who, in 1983, came in at the last minute and put his definitive stamp on my *Rebel Yell* album, helping us to bring it to an incredible finish. He became a friend as well as musical compatriot who brought immense talent and heart to everything he did. I will miss him."

Price's close pal Steve Conte of the New York Dolls called Price an "amazing groove drummer, fantastic human being and a wonderful friend", and revealed that he had defied major health problems to continue performing. "Thommy was a real warrior, with all of his health issues, some of the toughest a person can deal with, he really hung in there for quite a while," Conte said. "I loved the guy and will miss him forever." **DL**

Viv Prince

August 9, 1941 – September 2025

Once hailed as "the high priest of lunacy", drummer Viv Prince was among the great eccentric characters of the 1960s rock scene in Britain. He was a member of The Pretty Things, and appeared on both of their albums from 1965: *The Pretty Things* and *Get The Picture?*. His zany and unpredictable behaviour, on stage and off, which garnered a lot of publicity for the group, was a big influence on The Who's drummer Keith Moon.

Loughborough-born Prince reportedly declined an invite to join The Kinks before becoming a Pretty Thing. Jimmy Page once claimed that Moon attended gigs by The Pretty Things to study Prince's chaotic technique. Some say Prince was responsible for coining Moon's nickname Moon The Loon. Later on, Prince was also reportedly a part of the team behind Screaming Lord Such's election campaign with The Monster Raving Loony Party, although much of this is hearsay.

On Instagram, Jack White described Prince as "an incredible drummer, [who was] wild and full of abandon", and added: "Maybe I'll have to put together a team to work on a documentary about this man one day".

Details of Prince's passing, at the age of 84, are scant, although he was believed to have lived out his final days in the Algarve. **DL**

Ace Finchum

January 19, 1963 – October 2025

Former Tigertailz drummer Ace Finchum has died of unannounced cause at the age of 62. Tall, blond and likeable, he had two spells with the Welsh glam-metal titans, from 1984 until 1991 and again from 2011 to 2013, and appeared on their albums *Young & Crazy*, *Bezerk* and *Banzai!*. He also undertook session work with various bands including Marseille and Angel Witch.

Born in Ipswich and eventually residing in the US, Stephen Finchum, nicknamed Ace, was persuaded to relocate to Cardiff and join Tigertailz by singer Steevi Jaimz after they met in California. The band's 1987 debut album *Young And Crazy* brought them cult success, but the group's management and label, Music For Nations, lobbied for them to change their singer. The rebooted line-up, fronted by Kim Hooker, made the UK Top 40 with their second album, *Bezerk*. But while Finchum and Jaimz reconciled, Finchum never forgave himself for joining his bandmates in voting Jaimz, the man who had brought him back to the UK, out of the band, later lamenting: "It seemed insane but I had no choice."

"Ace was the heartbeat behind it all: wild, funny, unpredictable, and always full of spirit," said guitarist Jay Pepper, who continues to lead the band. "Those days, that laughter, that noise – they'll stay with me forever." **DL**

DANNY THOMPSON: DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS; THOMMY PRICE: JOHN KISCH ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; VIV PRINCE: WATFORD/MIRRORPIX/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES; TIGERTAILZ: BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

John Lodge

July 20, 1943 – October 10, 2025

The bass player and a vocalist with British group The Moody Blues for more than 50 years has died at the age of 82. The family of John Lodge say that he "peacefully slipped away surrounded by his loved ones and the sounds of the Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly". Cause of death has not been disclosed.

The family's statement continued: "As anyone who knew this massive-hearted man knows, it was his enduring love of his wife, Kirsten, and his family, that was the most important thing to him, followed by his passion for music, and his faith.

"He was never happier than being on stage – he was 'just a singer in a rock'n'roll band' and he adored performing with his band and son-in-law, Jon [Davison, vocalist with Yes], and being able to continue sharing this music with his fans. It gave him even more joy to be able to work with his daughter Emily and son Kristian and spend time watching his grandson John-Henry play football and dream of him playing for Birmingham City one day!"

It concluded: "As John would say at the end of the show, thank you for keeping the faith."

Born in 1943 in Erdington, Birmingham, Lodge fell in love with the early rock'n'roll of Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly. He joined The Moody Blues in 1966, replacing Clint Warwick, and remained with the group until they ceased activity in 2018.

With Lodge on bass and vocals, The Moody Blues enjoyed notable critical and commercial success after finding their feet with their pioneering second album *Days Of Future Passed*. The band's 1969 album *On The Threshold Of A Dream* topped the UK album chart, and that feat was repeated by 1970's *A Question Of Balance* and 1971's *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. Their 1970 single *Question* reached No.2 in the UK and remained on the chart for 12 weeks.

The Moody Blues were also massively popular in middle America, where their songs and lyrics struck a personal note with millions of people trying to make some sense out of the triumph of landing a man on the Moon on one hand, and the grim reality of the Vietnam War on the other. For a couple of years they were the biggest-selling English band in the US, and 1972's *Seventh Sojourn* topped the chart there for five weeks.

"It was an era of hope and awareness, but they were being incredibly frustrated by the Vietnam War," Lodge told *Classic Rock* in 2008. "We were relating to the seventeen-to-eighteen-year-olds who were going out there to fight, and they were coming to our gigs. There were a lot of strange conflicts going on in people's minds. I still get people who come up and say: 'I have to tell you, in 1968 I was in Vietnam, absolutely scared stiff. And I just kept playing your album over and over again'."

In 1975, Lodge co-created the album *Blue Jays*, a collaborative project between him and Moody Blues bandmate Justin Hayward, which reached No.4 in the UK. He released his debut solo album, *Natural Avenue*, in 1977, but then didn't release his second, *10,000 Light Years Ago*, until 38 years later, in 2015.

After The Moody Blues ceased recording and performing, Lodge focused more heavily on his own records. He released the live album *The Royal Affair And After* in 2021, the studio album *Days Of Future Passed – My Sojourn* (a reimagining of the 1967 Moody Blues album) in 2023, and the EP *Love Conquers All* on Valentine's Day this year.

Lodge married Kirsten in 1968, and credited his Christian faith with helping him to avoid "the excesses" of the rock'n'roll lifestyle. *Classic Rock*'s sister magazine *Prog* gave him the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Annual Prog Awards in London in 2019. **MM**

HE WAS JUST A SINGER (IN A ROCK'N' ROLL BAND)

STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"Sad to hear of John's passing. I had lunch with him a few weeks ago, so this is quite a shock. They were another Birmingham band, often overlooked. RIP."
Tony Iommi

"John Lodge was a fine guitarist from a groundbreaking band."
Steve Hackett

"I am deeply saddened. John was always super friendly to everyone – a great man. I will miss him."
Carl Palmer

"John was a good friend, a truly lovely guy in addition to his renowned musicianship. I have great memories of touring with him on the 2019 Royal Affair tour and spent many a fun night with him since then. A sad loss to all."
Geoffrey Downes

"Rock 'n' roll has lost another legend. RIP to an amazing bassist and songwriter. Prayers to your friends and family."
Jonathan Cain

"I'm deeply saddened by the loss of my dear friend. My heartfelt condolences and love go out to John's family at this difficult time."
Kenney Jones

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Film Of Bowie's Berlin Years

BBC preps documentary on his art-rock era.

The BBC is preparing a new documentary covering David Bowie's so-called 'Berlin trilogy', the albums made by the singer in the German capital at the end of the 70s, an immensely creative period in Bowie's career. Besides making his own records *Low*, *"Heroes"* and *Lodger*, Bowie also produced and co-wrote the albums *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life* for friend Iggy Pop.

With the working title *Bowie In Berlin*, the film's director is Francis Whatley, who directed previous Bowie films *Finding Fame*, *The Last Five Years* and *Five Years*.

In addition to interviews shot prior to Bowie's passing in 2016, the documentary uses the words of four women – Clare Shenstone, Romy Haag, Sarah-Rena Hine and Sydne Rome – who "shared his life during this time", a press release says. "Each have their own unique insight into the singer's life, art and character," it continues, "providing a secret history of Bowie's time in the city." **ND**

David Bowie: new film covers fruitful period.

Iron Maiden run to Knebworth!

Plus: their classic live album celebrates its 40th in style.

This month's cover stars have added more dates to the 2026 leg of their epic Run For Your Lives world tour - including a return to one of the UK's most iconic outdoor live music venues. Iron Maiden will play a special one-off date at Knebworth Park on Saturday, July 11. "We will be taking over the whole of the grounds ourselves and turning it into as much of a 'Maiden World' as we can for all our fans to enjoy!" says manager Rod Smallwood. The supporting line-up features The Darkness, The Hu, Airbourne and The Almighty.

The band have also revealed that a new, limited edition collectors' 2-LP colour vinyl of their classic live album *Live After Death* is on the way to mark its 40th anniversary. Featuring the original artwork, the album comes as two 140g vinyl records (one blue, one yellow) with the 2015 audio remastering. The package also includes a replica World Slavery Tour programme, a replica tour pass and a glossy 12-page booklet, containing an exclusive new essay entitled *Rime And Punishment: Celebrating 40 Years Of Live After Death*. It will be released on November 28.

NEWS

After receiving complaints about the fireworks at the end of **AC/DC**'s Murrayfield Stadium show in August, which are said to have broken "permitted noise levels", Edinburgh City Council are considering banning fireworks at the stadium completely.

On December 31 **MTV** will cease as a music video channel in the UK after 38 years. The world's first 24-hour music broadcaster launched in the US on August 1, 1981, with *Video Killed The Radio Star* by The Buggles its first song.

Bruce Dickinson will record his next solo album in January. The Iron Maiden frontman plans to track the follow-up to his 2024 set *The Mandrake Project* live in the studio. "We're doing it old-school," Dickinson told pro-wrestler and Fozzy frontman Chris Jericho in his podcast. "[We'll be] recording everything live, on the floor."

Queen are officially the most-played rock act on UK TV and radio in the 21st century so far. US bands Kings Of Leon and The Killers, who both released their first recordings in 2003, are the only relatively modern bands to have made the chart compiled to celebrate the upcoming National Album Day 2025.

Amid emotional scenes in New Jersey on October 11, Kelly Hansen (pictured) signed off as frontman with **Foreigner**, having joined in 2005. The band's current guitarist Luis Maldonado will step up to the mic.

WELCOME BACK

Holly Golightly

After seven years, the cult favourite resurfaces with a new album steeped in southern alt.blues flavour.

Holly Golightly has been a survivor on the British garage-band circuit since the 90s, releasing 13 solo albums and more than 20 collaborative records. Long associated with Billy Childish and the Medway scene in Kent, she came to prominence with the riot-grrrl-spirited Thee Headcoatees before striking out on her own and later with roots-rock duo The Brokeoffs. Her new album, *Look Like Trouble*, is a collection of new alt.Americana songs with a distinctive English sensibility.

You recorded the new album in London with your longtime British band. How did it come together?
We did it at Gizzard [studio]. I've worked there for many years. I brought over songs I'd been sketching for six or seven years. We don't rehearse, I just show the band my notes, and once we're in the studio it becomes something else.

> **"People sometimes think I'm aloof or difficult."**

There's a deep, dark quality to the song *Black Tongue*. What is a black tongue?
It's a hex. In the South there's a saying: if you speak badly about people, your tongue will go black. So the lyric is a kind of hoodoo warning. Not malicious, just tradition.

***It's All* is a very simple song, yet deeply resonant. What was the inspiration?**
I lost three close friends last year, musicians I'd known for decades. I couldn't get back [to the UK] for their funerals, so I wrote the song for their memorials. It's very simple: '*We stumble through it all, we stand until we fall*.' That's really all there is to say.

It's seven years since your previous album. What kept you?
Covid happened. But I've always had a parallel career. Music has been a hobby to me. My day job is in the legal field, and I only get so much time off. When I come to England I've got to see my parents, my friends, play a London show, maybe tour, so recording often got squeezed out.

What took you to Georgia?
Owning land was always my childhood dream. In London I could have worked three jobs and never managed it, so I packed up the kitchen sink and went. Now I've got thirty acres with four horses, a donkey and a mini-mule. It hasn't been easy, but it's the life I wanted.

Do you have a bohemian mindset?
Yes. Both my parents were bohemians – they went to the Royal College of Art, never conformed. I grew up in that atmosphere. They were horrified when I said I wanted to be a riding instructor, then baffled when I started playing what they thought was very square music. But the ethos stuck: anyone can do what they like.

How did you come to sing that duet with Jack White?
I lived round the corner from Toe Rag [studio] when they [The White Stripes] were making *Elephant* [2003], and Meg [White] was staying at my flat. One night in a restaurant, Jack scribbled a lyric and said: "Let's try this." And that became our duet, *It's True That We Love One Another*.

***Look Like Trouble* – is that how you think people see you?**
That's another Southern phrase: you should look like it but not be it. People sometimes think I'm aloof or difficult, but I'm not trouble at all. **DS**

Look Like Trouble is out now via Damaged Goods.

DAVID BOWIE: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; KELLY HANSEN: KEVIN NIXON

ANATHEME/PRESS

★ HIGH HOPES

Die Spitz

> “I don’t know why people think young people don’t listen to rock or metal. Everybody we know listens to Black Sabbath.”

They hate being touted as the next big thing. They hate interviews. But they love rock.

Die Spitz’s music is a whirlwind of kinetic teenage energy. Mixing elements of grunge, psychedelia, post-punk, epic metal and hooky indie rock, they’re a youthful smack in the teeth with zero pretence and even less filter. But being born in 2002-2003, what do they think of when we say ‘classic rock’?

“I feel nothing,” says guitarist Chloe Andrews, while in the background drummer Ellie Livingston wails the chorus of Aerosmith’s *Dream On*.

“I feel nothing when I hear ‘classic rock’. I never listened to it,” adds guitarist/vocalist Ava Schrobilgen . “I was not allowed to listen to AC/DC or any kind of hair metal growing up, because my dad thought it was misogynistic. Of course, I love it now.”

“People are calling us ‘Austin legends’,” Andrews says with a laugh. “Legends? Really? We’re all 22 and 23-years-old. Who knows, maybe we’re classic rock.”

This all sounds vaguely combative, but really it’s not. This is a tight-knit group who forged their friendships back in middle school, skateboarding and causing minor-league havoc. They formed Die Spitz during the pandemic with no goal except to have fun and make great music. And they’ve achieved both. You get the feeling they’re here for a good time, not a long time. And in an age when almost every successful band rapidly wear out their welcome, it’s refreshing to have a band out there living in the now.

“Sometimes our industry plant, like, writes our music,” Andrews deadpans, when asked about their writing process. “Sometimes Simon Cowell writes the music for us. Sometimes it’s AI. Sometimes we just go: ‘Write a sad song for us, AI.’ ChatGPT really does most of it.”

Die Spirtz are currently touring the new album, but if you’re looking for tales of bloody-knuckled backstage decadence, you’ve come to the wrong place. “We’re boring as fuck,” claims Andrews. “I played ball with Ava last night. And sometimes we play ‘fantasy’, where we pretend we’re doing something, because we don’t have the time to actually do it. Like sometimes we just pretend we’re drinking.”

Different eras apparently require different tactics. And like it is with the handful of Gen Z rock bands currently making a splash, Die Spitz are often burdened with the arduous task of saving rock’n’roll. Which they have no intention of doing.

“I don’t even know how you’d go about that,” Schrobilgen says, laughing. “But we’re not gonna do it.”

“It doesn’t even need any saving,” says Andrews. “Rock’n’roll is fine. There’s King Gizzard, Amyl, Idles, there’s plenty of young bands out there doing their thing. I don’t know why people think young people don’t listen to rock or metal. Everybody we know listens to fucking Black Sabbath.” **KM**

Something To Consume is out now via Third Man.

FOR FANS OF...

BLACK SABBATH
MASTER OF REALITY

“If there’s one album we all agree on, it’s *Master Of Reality*,” says Andrews. “It has a kinda similar variance of vibes we like. Not, like, to go for, but that we happen to achieve. Ellie’s dad turned us on to it.”

“The songs are still relevant today,” says Livingston. “People are always going to want to listen to *Children Of The Grave*.”

Foos Surprise-Release Live EP

Six-tracker recorded at recent low-key dates.

Foo Fighters have surprise-released a new live EP titled *Are Playing Where??? Vol. 1*. The six-track EP features recordings from the group's recent secret shows in the US which saw Dave Grohl and company embark on a short tour of intimate venues including the Fremont Theater in San Luis Obispo, The Observatory in Santa Ana, Black Cat in B.C. and Toad's Place in New Haven. These were the Foos' first live appearances with their new drummer Ilan Rubin,who formerly played with Nine Inch Nails.

Its track-listing comprises *Alone + Easy Target*, *Exhausted*, *Watershed*, *Weenie Beenie*, *White Limo* and *Winnebago*.

The EP is available exclusively on Bandcamp, with proceeds going to local charities in the cities in which the band played the shows. **ND**

Foo Fighters: six-shooting.

Magnum Keep Their Night Light Burning

New album of Tony Clarkin songs in the works.

Despite the passing of Magnum guitarist, songwriter and producer Tony Clarkin in January 2024, the band – still fronted by their co-founding singer Bob Catley – are to release a new album, and have been confirmed as 'special guests' to Europe at next year's Stonedead Festival.

Comprising songs written by Clarkin and hand-picked by his daughter Dionne from an archive of material, the group's twenty-fourth album will also feature his guitar playing, alongside Catley, bassist Dennis Ward and drummer Lee Morris (the current line-up is completed by Clarkin's long-term guitar tech Brendon Riley on guitar). More details when we get them.

Meanwhile, Mark Stanway's Kingdom Of Madness, formed by ex-Magnum keyboard player Stanway and also including former members Micky Barker and Richard Bailey, have announced that due to difficulties with scheduling, following a November and December tour of the UK, during which they will perform two sets, The Jet Records Years and Storytellers And Beyond, the band will go on hiatus. **DL**

NEWS

Bruce Springsteen says he did not warn the E Street Band about his now-famous anti-Donald Trump monologue in Manchester earlier this year, later released as part of an EP, *Land Of Hope And Dreams*. All he told the group prior to the show was that things "might get a little heavy tonight".

Song Cake is a new TV show and podcast that celebrates great songs and the artists who write and record them. Presented by Jason Perry, frontman of alt.rockers 'A', and *Classic Rock*'s Philip Wilding, it's shot in front of an audience in Stratford, London. First guests include Coheed & Cambria and Wolfgang Van Halen. More at: songcake.net

Gene Simmons is at home and "doing fine" after being hospitalised briefly following a car accident in Malibu. "I had a slight fender bender," the former Kiss bassist posted. "It happens. Especially to those of us who are horrible drivers. And that's me."

KK Downing is to produce the second album from British hopefuls **Tailgunner**. "They personify everything that is heavy metal," says the former Judas Priest guitarist.

Yungblud (pictured) has reacted to the musicians who voiced negativity at his recent tribute to Ozzy Osbourne at MTV's Video Music Awards, calling them "bitter and jealous". Among the leading critics was Dan Hawkins of The Darkness, who dismissed Yungblud's spot as "cynical, nauseating and, more importantly, shit".

WELCOME BACK

The Trews

CR's Best New Band 2007 nominees return with their eighth studio album, and still have "an eye on the prize".

Formed in Nova Scotia back in 1997, The Trews became one of Canada's Top-40 best-selling acts. As they release their first studio album in four years – and following last month's one-off UK show in London – siblings Colin (vocals, rhythm guitar) and John-Angus MacDonald (lead guitar, backing vocals) talk to *CR* about the band's past, present and future.

What does *The Bloody Light* add to The Trews' catalogue that its seven predecessors did not?
John-Angus MacDonald: For many different reasons the older one gets, the harder it can be to make new music. Unearthing that batch of tunes that does it for everybody is a steep hill to climb. It took us a few years to get this material together, but I truly believe the album adds twelve very strong new songs to our catalogue.

> "We played one song in front of what felt like the entire world."

***Carolina* – pronounced Carol-leena – is a wonderfully uplifting slice of music, with lots of harmonies.**
Colin MacDonald: Where we come from on the East Coast of Canada there's a wonderful tradition of kitchen parties where *everybody* sings, so that stuff comes naturally to us. In the band's early days we used to make money busking with our four-part harmonies. It's something people love about our band.

The album's winsome ballad *Beyond The End And Once Upon A Time* projects a welcome ray of optimism in these difficult times.
CM: One of the nicest things anyone ever said about The Trews is that we write uplifting songs without ever being cheesy. We want to leave the listener with a sense of hope, without being trite.

We have *Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life* to thank for your band name.
CM: Yeah. My first band was One Eyed Trouser Snake, and when I started this band with Angus and Jack [Syperek, bass] it began as One I'd Trouser, then just Trouser, and The Trews. But it all stemmed from *Monty Python*.

Last year The Trews played *Highway Of Heroes* on Juno Beach in Normandy, France, for the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasions. Was that emotional?
CM: It was the most significant gig of our whole career. We tried not to let the moment get too big [in our minds] before we did it. It was one song in front of what felt like the entire world, including Prince William. The Prime Ministers of Canada and France were there in the front row. It went well, but it was pretty stressful.

Following last month's show in London, what about a full British tour?
JM: We always love coming to the UK, and it had been around eleven years since our last visit.
CM: That Camden gig was about dipping our toe back in, and of course we want to come back for a second, bigger run.

Back in 2007, The Trews were one of the groups nominated for Best New Band at the Classic Rock Awards. Are you satisfied with the progress you've made during the interim?
JM: 'Satisfied' is a tough word to use. Obviously our career has been primarily in Canada, and we maintain a high level of success here. But we still have an eye on the prize. **DL**

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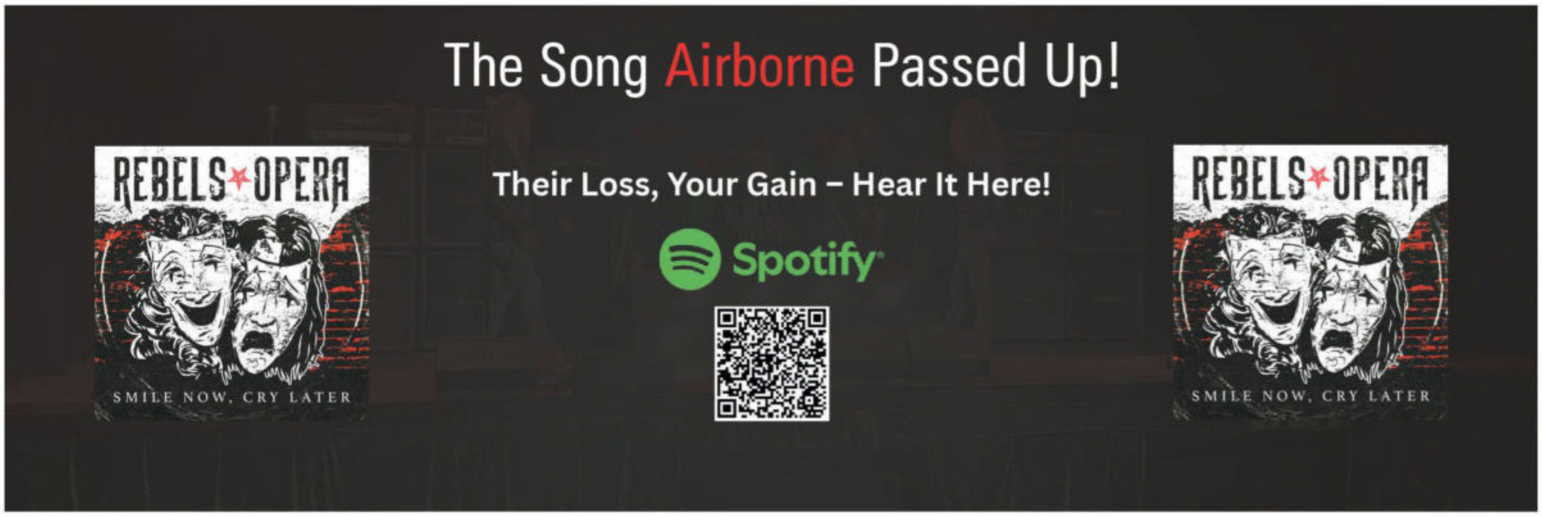
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October 17th	Albert Halls, Stirliing
November 1st	Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon
November 6th	The Forum, Bath
November 7th	The Woodville, Gravesend
November 8th	Kings Hall, Herne Bay
November 9th	Kings Hall, Herne Bay
November 13th	Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield
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“Blues is life experience. Blues is pain and anger. But it’s also good times.”

★ HIGH HOPES

Christone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram

A triple-threat blues prodigy channels the ghosts of the past on his new album.

When you’re born and raised near the site of Robert Johnson’s mythical crossroads, it only follows that you’d pick up a guitar and play the blues. “There’s not much to do in Clarksdale – it’s either music, sports or illegal stuff,” says Christone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram of his Mississippi hometown. “I chose music because it was around me 24/7. I lived right next to guys who were in a blues band.”

Born in 1999, Ingram was three when he started singing gospel in church. Age five, his dad showed him a documentary about Muddy Waters, and BB King’s musical cameo on sitcom *Sanford & Son*. But at a time when kids his age were listening to Rihanna and Lil Wayne, was it strange to be digging into what some friends called “that sad, old stuff?”

“I was never shy about my love for blues music,” says Ingram.”My classmates would ask questions and I’d explain about blues being the root and all the other music being its fruit. Maybe I gave them some understanding of what it was.”

His own understanding deepened when his parents got divorced, and he and his mum were homeless for a short spell. “That’s when I started to double down on the blues and get serious about playing,” he says. At the Delta Blues Museum in his hometown, he was mentored on drums, bass and guitar by two bluesmen, Richard ‘Daddy Rich’ Crisman and Bill ‘Howl-N-Mad’ Perry (he gave Ingram his nickname, after a character on the *Amos ’n’ Andy* radio sitcom). By the age of 14, he was gigging regularly (and he even performed for Michelle Obama at the White House). That led to a fateful meeting with blues legend Buddy Guy, who took Ingram under his wing. “After I played the Waterfront Blues Festival, Mr. Guy said he wanted to help me put out a record. He put the money up, and put me in touch with his producer, Tom Hambridge. We’ve been working together ever since.”

Ingram’s fourth album, *Hard Road*, is the studio follow-up to 2021’s Grammy-winning *662*. From the ramrod blues groove of *Bad Like Me* to the crying Hendrix-like invocations of *Crosses* to the delicate 70s soul of *Clearly*, it’s packed with Ingram’s expressive gifts, mining the past while looking to the future. “I always try to showcase growth,” he says. “I’m doing the blues thing, but on this record, I’m adding in R&B, funk and rock, trying to create something new.”

Currently on tour, Ingram is humble about his role in spreading the blues gospel. “Some people think that the blues is ‘my baby left me’ and long guitar solos,” he says. “But it’s a whole lot deeper than that. Blues is life experience. Blues is pain and anger. But it’s also good times. All across the world, I find people who appreciate that.” **BDM**

Hard Road is out now on Red Zero. Ingram’s UK tour starts in London on November 18.

FOR FANS OF...

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
SMASH HITS

Ingram’s mum bought him a Hendrix compilation when he was eight. “The first track was *Purple Haze*. And it immediately fucked me up! You can’t play blues rock guitar and *not be influenced* by Jimi,” he reasons. You’ll hear Hendrix-style searing wah-wah licks and hammered-on chording all over Ingram’s new album.

JEN ROSENSTEIN

ACE FREHLEY

April 27, 1951 – October 16, 2025

He went from teen wannabe to global superstar as the founding guitarist with Kiss, with whom he toured the world and sold millions of albums. In a career blighted by problems often caused by substance abuse, as a guitarist the Space Ace was unique and an inspiration to many.

Words: **Dave Ling**

As this issue of *Classic Rock* went to press, we heard the awful news that Ace Frehley, the zany yet inspired co-founding guitarist of Kiss and long-standing solo artist, had died after suffering a brain bleed following a fall. It was the second of two recent tumbles Ace had at his studio in late September as he worked on a new album. He was airlifted to hospital and placed on a ventilator, but he passed away several hours later in Morristown, New Jersey. He was 74 years old.

Frehley had two spells with New York-based glam titans Kiss, firstly from their foundation in 1973 until a messy exit circa the *Creatures Of The Night* album in 1982. He was part of a 1996 reunion of the original line-up, and remained on board for a further six years.

Completely self-taught as a guitarist, Frehley's style and persona were a massive influence on subsequent generations of rock musicians. On December 7 when Kiss receive Kennedy Center Honors, Frehley will be only the third person to receive the honour posthumously.

> **"I'm about amps, guitars, singing. As long as it's fun, I'll keep doing it."**
>
> **Ace Frehley**

The guitarist's relationship with fellow original Kiss members Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley was never an easy one. Frehley liked to have a good time, which often led to butting of heads with teetotal bass player Simmons and rhythm guitarist Stanley, who largely partied in moderation. He was something of a square peg in a round hole, but that's what made his contribution to Kiss so vital.

All the same, even after Ace belatedly found sobriety in 2006 the pair continued to keep him at arm's length. And while Simmons insists that Frehley and co-founding drummer Peter Criss were both invited to attend the band's final hometown send-off in December 2023, joining them on stage was never going to fly.

Frehley was a hugely talented musician, but he could be his own worst enemy – promoting the solo record that would prove to be his last, *10,000 Volts*, he boasted "My new album is going to make Paul Stanley look like an imbecile".

From Frehley's perspective, he had endured a lifetime of humiliation and belittlement from the group's leaders, and in the autumn of his life he just wouldn't take it any more.

"In the last few months Paul put me down pretty badly," Ace told *CR*'s Dave Everley. "He even told [shock-jock] Howard Stern that if me and Peter got up on stage with them at Madison Square Garden, you might as well call the band Piss instead of Kiss."

It was a cheap shot, to be sure, and knowing what *Classic Rock* does of Stanley, in the cold light of day he probably regretted saying it. But for Frehley this was just another brick in the wall between him and his former partners.

"That [comment] got to me. We ended up having some words," Ace sighed during the same interview. "But I'm really done with the tit-for-tat."

In the grand scheme of things, the spat might be dismissed as brotherly rough and tumble, ▷

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Kiss and make-up: (l-r) Paul Stanley, Peter Criss, Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley.

and a full reconnection took place during the final hours of Frehley's life. "We are devastated by the passing of Ace Frehley," said a statement from Simmons and Stanley. "He is and will always be a part of Kiss's legacy."

It continued: "In his last moments, we were fortunate enough to have been able to surround him with loving, caring, peaceful words, thoughts, prayers and intentions as he left this earth.

"We cherish all of his finest memories, his laughter, and celebrate his strengths and kindness that he bestowed upon others. The magnitude of his passing is of epic proportions, and beyond comprehension. Reflecting on all of his incredible life achievements, Ace's memory will continue to live on forever!"

The youngest of three children, Paul Daniel Frehley was born in a middle-class area of the Bronx, one of the five boroughs of New York City. The Frehley family lived together in a one-bedroom apartment, with Paul and a brother sleeping on a bunk bed in their parents' bedroom, his sister sleeping on the living-room couch. Money was tight, but there was a lot of love – and music. Everything changed when his dad handed 16-year-old Paul his first instrument.

"It was a cheap, twenty-five-dollar Japanese guitar," Frehley told to *Classic Rock*. "Once I hit the E-chord with the volume all the way up on the amp, it was love at first sight; or first hearing or whatever you want to call it."

While journeying through his earliest bands, Frehley dropped out of high school, and trouble with the NY police was never too far away. "I'd been arrested probably half a dozen times before I was in Kiss," Ace admitted. "I learned the hard way, but I think it's helped me in life. You've gotta have street smarts to survive."

"I knew that if I didn't leave the group I was going to die."

Ace Frehley

It was an advert placed in the *Village Voice* newspaper that led Frehley to the fledgling Kiss. On January 3, 1973, he famously turned up for his audition wearing mismatched sneakers, but his playing got him the gig.

Man in the mirror: bringing the Space Ace to life.

When the band decided to take on individual stage identities and paint their faces for live shows, Stanley the Starman, Simmons the Demon and Criss the Catman, Frehley's fascination with science fiction brought him the moniker Space Ace. To make things more fascinating still, Kiss subsequently went to extreme lengths to avoid being photographed without make-up.

Although Kiss's gonzoid stage show – which involved colourful costumes, and enough pyrotechnics to blow up the Chase Manhattan Bank – brought them cult acclaim, their early records were not successful. A make-or-break last throw of the dice, the double gatefold concert set *Alive!* not only rescued their career but also began the process of fast-tracking them towards superstardom.

Frehley was loved for his occasional lead vocal tracks like *Shock Me*, and also for playing a guitar that doubled as a rocket launcher.

At their height of their fame the four band members simultaneously recorded solo albums, all released on September 18, 1978. Debate over their relative merits still rages. But, thanks largely to cover of the English glitter-rock combo Hello's hit *New York Groove*, up against the stylistically diverse releases from Simmons and Criss, Frehley's Eddie Kramer-produced record sold the best.

"I expected that," Ace wrote in his 2011 memoir *No Regrets*. "My

TOP: GINNY WINN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: TOM HILL/WIREIMAGE

goal was to make a really solid, guitar-based album, and I did. Mine outsold the other three albums and produced a top-twenty single."

Frehley didn't hold back in criticising Simmons's album, which included cameos from Donna Summer, Cher and Helen Reddy. "Helen Reddy? Really Gene? What the fuck?" Ace wrote in his book. "With Gene it was always about making money, advancing and expanding the brand. It was never about art. Never about music."

Wildly differing responses to the solo records ensured that within Kiss nothing was quite the same again. As the 1980s dawned, drummer Peter Criss was voted out of the line-up, ensuring that Gene and Paul inevitably won any vote over direction. The band cut their hair and changed costumes for the ambitious but dismally received conceptual set *Music From 'The Elder'*. An uncomfortable Ace took a back seat, many of his solos rejected.

By the next album, *Creatures Of The Night*, Kiss were back on track. Their record deal had been re-negotiated, and each member was $20 million richer. Unfortunately, Frehley was ever more self-destructive. "I had lost interest in the band," he wrote in *No Regrets*. "My days passed in a blur of drinking and drugging. I knew that if I didn't leave the group I was going to die."

Having almost killed himself when he crashed a Porsche, in scenes reminiscent of *Smokey And The Bandit*, a sky-high Ace was also pursued by cops in his DeLorean for an hour at speeds of up to 90mph, crashing into several other vehicles. The incident inspired a great song called *Rock Soldiers* for his next project, Frehley's Comet, but at that point in his life Ace wasn't in the right shape to be a band leader. ▷

LEFT: FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS; RIGHT: TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

"THERE'S A LITTLE ACE FREHLEY IN ALL OF US"

STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"Ace was an absolute guitar hero to so many people. I did more tours with him than anybody else, as far as opening for us, for quite a long time and we became quite good friends. Ace was an ace. We'll miss you!"
Alice Cooper

"Ace was a hero of mine and also I would consider him a friend. I studied his solos endlessly over the years. I would not have picked up a guitar without Ace and Kiss's influence. RIP it out Ace, you changed my life."
Mike McCready, Pearl Jam

"Back in 1974, as openers for Kiss, Alex, Neil [Peart] and myself spent many a night in Ace's hotel room, doing whatever nonsense we could think of, just to make him break out his inimitable and infectious laugh. RIP Ace, thanks for welcoming us newbies into the rock and roll world."
Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, Rush

"Space Ace was one of a kind – a true rock 'n' roll original with a sound and style all his own. Rest easy, you'll be missed but never forgotten."
Joe Perry, Aerosmith

"Ace was long gone when we got to know Kiss, but he left his mark on their music. His version of *New York Groove* hit the spot more so than any other. RIP Spaceman."
Joe Elliott, Def Leppard

"RIP Spaceman. You made rock'n'roll cool and fun, and you laughed all the way. Many could learn from that."
Mike Tramp

"Ace Frehley was awesome. Plain and simple. As that jovial dude, he contradicted/challenged the generic – and sometimes silly-rock-star mannerism of his 'bosses', Gene and Paul. The 'Spaceman' was human, after all."
Mikael Åkerfeldt, Opeth

"A heartbreak! Ace will always be in our hearts! RIP my friend!"
Vince Neil, Mötley Crüe

"It's impossible to imagine an Anthrax without Kiss and Ace Frehley. You shaped us as musicians, are we're eternally grateful."
Anthrax

"At 13 I posed in front of every mirror in the house with a tennis racket trying to stand knock-knees like Ace. Now I'm 61 years old and STILL posing knock-kneed and playing that same Les Paul. Rest in power you badass."
Damon Johnson, Lynyrd Skynyrd

"There is a little Ace Frehley in all of us. Thanks for changing all our lives forever."
Nashville Pussy

"His presence lit up stages like a supernova. The Spaceman has left the stage, but his orbit will shine forever."
Steve Vai

"My heart is so heavy I can barely find words. I was still in my teens when we became friends. He was my friend, a life and career mentor, my big brother. I love you, Pauly."
Blackie Lawless, W.A.S.P.

A self-taught musician, Frehley was an inspiration to generations of guitarists who came after him.

“I will go on till the wheels fall off. Even if I end up in a wheelchair, I can still write songs.”

Ace Frehley

In 1996, with their own career dipping after an era without make-up, even though highly cautious over the probability of the pair’s demons returning, Simmons and Stanley invited Frehley and Criss back on board. Things started encouragingly. The tour was a box-office smash, but Ace and Peter had little to do with a comeback set. This worked in their favour – for the most part Kiss’s *Psycho Circus* album wasn’t very good.

When flying between cities on tour, Frehley admitted to hollowing out prescribed medication tablets and refilling them with cocaine. Clearly, things couldn’t last. And when Ace arrived with minutes to spare before a gig, tour manager Tommy Thayer was ready in a Spaceman outfit to take the stage in his place. Kiss had a Plan B, in case of disaster.

KISS
LOVE GUN
KISS
KISS
ACE FREHLEY

Upon completion of their 2001 itinerary, during which Criss had walked away due to ‘contract details’, Kiss installed Thayer as a full-time guitarist, and Frehley was solo again. Perhaps with some justification – previously, during the make-up era, new Kiss band members such as Vinnie Vincent and Eric Carr had been assigned fresh images – it stuck in Ace’s throat that Thayer had a costume the same as his own, and identical make-up. But he found gallows humour in the situation. In a 2008 interview, when a writer pointed out that former Black N’ Blue man Thayer had once played in a Kiss tribute act, Frehley quipped: “He still is”. In another similar conversation, he said: “Paul and Gene have two impostors on stage with them.”

Following several unsuccessful attempts, sobriety changed Frehley’s life completely. “My [AA] sponsor told me: ‘You had to make those mistakes to get to where you are today, and he was right,’” Ace told *Classic Rock*.

With a clear head and a good woman in his life, Ace entered a fertile era, releasing five albums in a decade.

“I love to write songs, I love to record,” Ace told *Classic Rock* last year. “My fiancée’s got me on a strict diet of organic foods. She’s got me working out, lifting weights and doing push-ups. I’m down to a hundred and seventy-five pounds. I’ve never felt better in my life.”

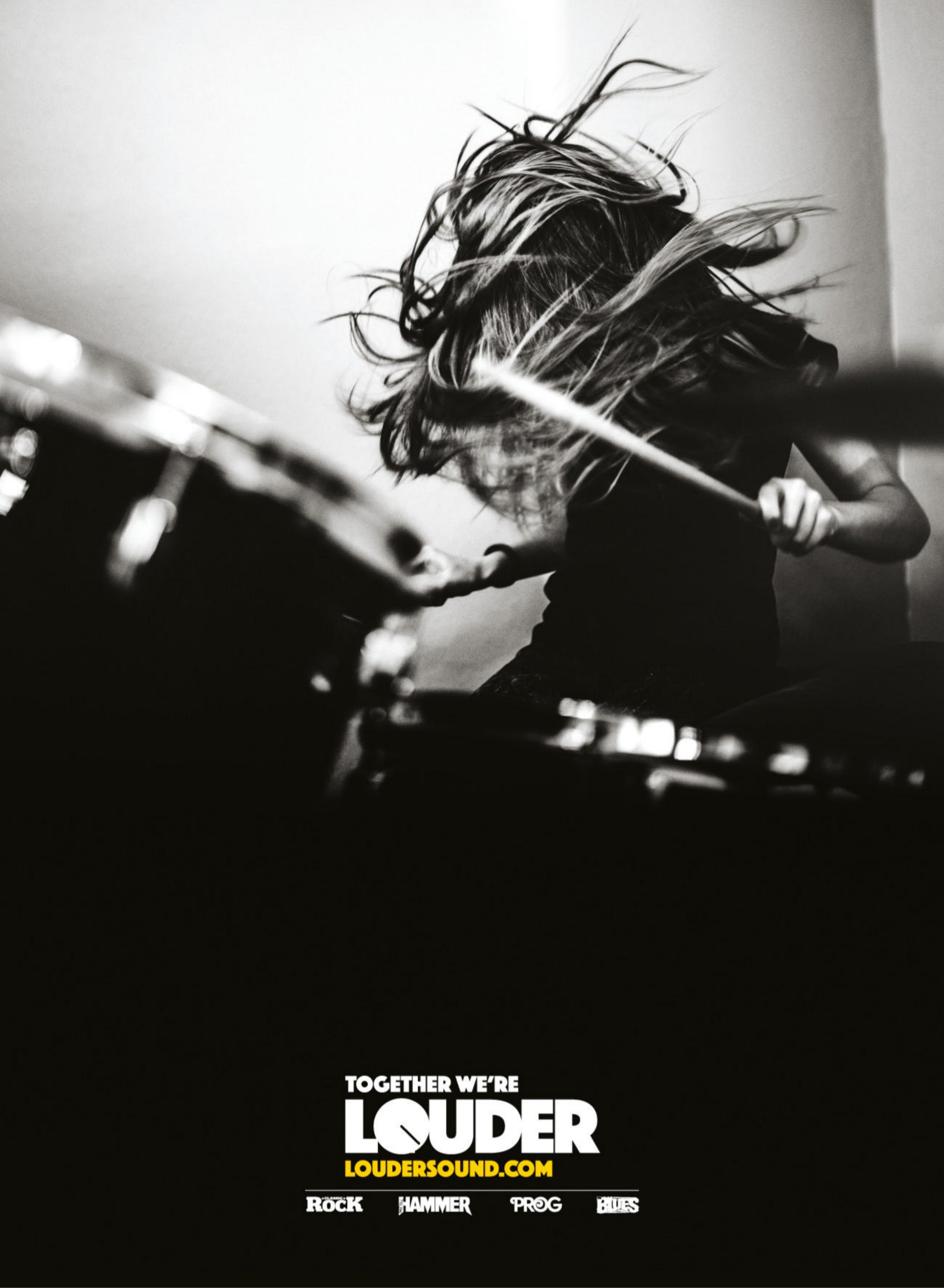
Certainly, unlike Kiss, at this point retirement was not on his mind.

“I don’t give it any thought,” Frehley insisted. “I will go on till the wheels fall off. Even if I end up in a wheelchair, I can still write songs.”

With typical laser-focused business savvy, Kiss used the second of their farewell New York shows to introduce a new AI-based future for themselves, although Ace saw neither logic nor appeal in turning himself into an avatar.

“That’s not what I’m all about,” he said. “I’m about amps, guitars, singing. As long as I can sing and write and play guitar, the sky’s the limit. I could have two more albums in me. I could have five more. As long as it’s fun, I’ll keep doing it.”

MAIN: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; INSET: JAYME THORNTON/PRESS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THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Levellers

Hope Street

During an era of post-grunge, the Levellers were derided as obsolete crusties, but one of their biggest hits was influenced by classic 70s rock.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

A free-spirited gang of underdogs who championed social causes and aligned themselves to the travelling community, Levellers were a fast-rising force come the mid-90s. The band's heady brand of anarcho folk-punk hit its commercial peak with 1995's *Zeitgeist*, their fourth album, due in no small part to the inclusion of open-hearted street anthems like *Hope Street*.

Released as a lead-off single that July, *Hope Street* is a song for the dispossessed and the forgotten, for all those struggling in the slipstream of economic progress. It's peopled by outcasts, addicts, vagrants and gamblers.

"I was living in Hove and travelling into Brighton every day to record *Zeitgeist*," says lyricist and bass player Jeremy Cunningham. "And *Hope Street* was a kind of heightened version of what I saw walking down the street. It's actually based on Western Road, which runs the length of Brighton into Hove. But the song is called *Hope Street* because there's a Hope Street in almost every town or city

"I'm a mad Smiths fan," he continues, "and I really wanted to write some words that were a bit more observational, like Morrissey did. So it's me having a go at telling that story. At that point, the council was trying to lift homeless people off the streets and then ship them off to the edge of town. The idea being that it would take them about a day to walk back in again. But at least they were off the streets for that short time. Then they'd lift them again when they finally made it in. So that's kind of a big part of the song: *'No old faces out today/ Someone took them all away.'*"

It's not all relentlessly grim. Mindful of his natural predilection for a downbeat lyric, Cunningham tempered the tale with a chorus that suggested all was not lost: *'Rain on me come pouring down, clean the dirt off this old town/Tell the sun to come around, and show his face on Hope Street.'* 'Hope' being the operative word.

"I didn't just want it to be about how miserable everything is," he explains, "which is why I tried to bring the sunshine stuff into it, to make it more uplifting."

Cunningham sat on the lyrics for a while before eventually taking them to his bandmates. Guitarist Simon Friend came back with a tune rooted in traditional shanty folk, but with a surging chorus. Singer Mark Chadwick and fiddle player Jonathan Sevink then did a spot of "finessing, making everything fit together really well. They do a lot of that".

Hope Street boasts a fiercely rocky intro that reappears throughout, leading to a grandstanding finale that finds Levellers operating at full steam.

"At the time, we were listening to a lot of Led Zeppelin," Cunningham recalls. "They're Mark's favourite band, so he was more than keen to get that riff in there. And Charlie [Heather]'s drums were recorded on the massive concrete staircase in the Metway, an old converted Victorian brewery which is our headquarters in Brighton. We put the kit out there, mic'd it up, and it just sounded immense. That was all down to Al Scott, our producer, suggesting that. He's quite aggressive in his production, which I really like."

> **"At the time we were listening to a lot of Led Zep. Mark was keen to get that riff in there."**

Hope Street was written while Levellers had already begun recording *Zeitgeist*. The first demo, as heard on the newly expanded 30th anniversary version of the album, reveals its gestation. The original opening line was *'There's a young boy sniffing glue…'*, later amended to *'There's a young boy in the queue…'*

So why the alteration?

"After hearing it a few times on playback, I just thought people would think it was a negative intro," reasons Cunningham. "But I wrote it because that's what I saw. There *was* a guy there sniffing glue. And it is a great line. If it had come up later on in the song, I think it would've been all right. But not as the first line. A lot of people who've heard the demo have asked if the record company told us to change it, but no, it had nothing to do with them. Although I'm sure they did breathe a sigh of relief."

Hope Street made it to No.12 in the UK. When *Zeitgeist* landed in early September, it debuted at No.2. A few TV ads later and it rose to the top spot. Another couple of *Zeitgeist* singles - *Fantasy* and *Just The One*, the latter with Joe Strummer guesting on piano (see panel, left) – also made the Top 20. Coming a year after their headline performance at Glastonbury, in front of an estimated 300,000 people, Levellers' success seemed like a pleasing anomaly. Britpop, a movement with which they had only a passing affiliation, was then at its height. Below them in the upper reaches of the album chart sat Oasis, Blur, The Charlatans and Supergrass.

"We were on tour so much that the whole Britpop thing kind of passed us by," admits Cunningham. "So it didn't really play a massive part in our lives. We'd be in France or somewhere else, would fly over to do *Top Of The Pops* and then fly straight back out again to Europe. When you're at the centre of a whirlwind, like we were, you don't really notice what's going on around you so much. Plus we were young, so we were just interested in having a good time, basically."

Three decades on, however, *Hope Street* still feels painfully relevant as a piece of bitter social commentary. "It's not set in any particular time and place, but it's talking about stuff that happens all the time, everywhere," Cunningham offers. "There's always going to be people seeing that shit going on, so it's one of those songs that's never going to date. And even though it was made in the nineties, *Hope Street* was heavily influenced by folk and early-seventies stuff. So the music is kind of timeless as well. That's part of the reason for its longevity, I think."

The 30th anniversary remix edition of Zeitgeist is out now via Rhino.

JOE'S THE ONE

Having cut late-night jam *Just The One* for *Zeitgeist*, Levellers decided to re-record it as a single. "Our producer, Al Scott, suggested getting in a proper barroom pianist," recalls Jeremy Cunningham. "I remembered a credit on *London Calling* that says: 'Joe Strummer pianner'. So, as a joke, as I went, 'Let's get Joe Strummer in!' And he actually said yes. He turned up at our studio looking a bit bemused, saying: 'I'm not really sure why I'm here. I'm not a piano player.' But he was a hero of ours. *Just The One* has a really difficult time change, and Joe never did get it properly. On the finished version you can actually hear him going: 'Aghh!' because he'd fucked it up again. But it was such a great experience."

MARTYN GOODACRE/GETTY IMAGES

The Levellers outside Metway Studio in 1995.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
31 July 1995

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK 12

PERSONNEL
Mark Chadwick
Lead vocals, guitar
Jeremy Cunningham
Bass guitar
Simon Friend
Guitars, backing vocals
Charlie Heather
Drums
Jonathan Sevink
Fiddle

WRITTEN BY
Levellers

PRODUCER
Al Scott

LABEL
China

Q&A

Ian Gillan

His pole vaulting days may be behind him, but even at the age of 80 the Deep Purple singer is still in demand.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Ian Gillan has lost count of how many times he's been asked to sing on other people's songs. "Thousands," says the Deep Purple singer, speaking from his home in Portugal at the impressively early time of 8am on a Tuesday morning. "I don't normally say yes, but this seemed right at the time. I loved the song and they're a lovely bunch of guys."

The bunch of guys in question are Italian rockers Urock, led by singer Umberto Urock. Gillan appears on the title track of the Rome-based band's second album, *The Line*, trading lines and harmonies with Urock. He's not the only recognisable name to have been enlisted for the album – prog wizard Alan Parsons and, more bizarrely, former Nirvana producer Jack Endino are both involved in a production capacity, though Gillan didn't cross paths with either.

It comes during a period of downtime for Deep Purple before they hit the road once more next April.

"I just thought doing would be a bit of fun," the singer says of *The Line*. "And it was."

How did the collaboration with Urock come about?
Umberto lives just down the road from me in Portugal. He did a couple of interviews with me for various magazines, and Urock did the Portuguese show on Deep Purple's tour [in 2022]. But the main thing I remember is when I went to Rome, I went to the radio station [Rome Rock, which Urock is involved in]. It was just like going to someone's house, just a bunch of fantastic people.

They sent me some music they'd written. I thought: "That's pretty good." One thing led to another, so I went in the studio down the road and sang on the track.

Did you have any input into the music or lyrics?
Not in the slightest. It was all finished when I came along to do my bit. I just rocked up and sang a couple of lines.

Even so, there's a line in the song that feels pertinent: *'I don't want no regrets, I don't want to feel old.'* You turned eighty in August, and you recently did an interview for the *University Of The Third Age* magazine. Most musicians are in denial about getting old, but it seems like you're accepting of it.
I wasn't doing any interviews at all this year, but I've ended up doing half a dozen or so. The U3A thing caught my eye – I know the PR person involved, and it appealed to me.

It's talking about reality. It's hilarious this growing old thing. It's a laugh a minute.

Is it really? Or are you being ironic?
Well, sometimes yes and sometimes no. I walk down the road and hear something drop off - clang, there's something else gone.

What are the benefits of being the age you are?
Well, nothing's changed really apart from I can't pole vault any more. Other than that, things move a little more slowly. But nothing's changed. If you've got a sense of humour you can get by with most things.

In a recent online Q&A, you talked about losing your vision.
Yes, it's one of those things. I've only got thirty per cent vision. That won't get better.

How does that affect you?
It makes life mysterious. The hardest thing is working on my laptop. I can't see anything on the screen unless I use my peripheral vision – I pick up a line by looking at it sideways. But you find a way. You adapt. But it's achingly tiresome. It takes a long time to do the work.

Is the idea that rock'n'roll is a young man's game a myth these days, given that so many musicians are getting older?
It's interesting you say that. Throughout your entire life, you've had to deal with this thing – you get older every day. It's a slow process, but it happens. When you're a kid, you write about fast cars and loose women and that sort of thing, or at least we did in those days. And it's very rock'n'roll and had a lot of attack and youthful energy.

But I started thinking in my thirties: "This is ridiculous, this feels uncomfortable." So you have to find other things to write about – stuff that's interesting and off-the-wall. You have to adapt, otherwise you look like a fool. But you can write a song about anything, at least in my experience.

I think if I lose my energy I'm going to stop. I don't want to be an embarrassment to anyone. We're not far off that. It creeps up on you – you don't really notice.

But then this isn't like a normal job. It's all in your mind. The writing certainly is, and the ability. And these guys who I work with [in Deep Purple] just seem to keep improving. The hard thing is to keep them down.

What else have you got on the go? Is there a new Purple album in the pipeline?
There's not much to talk about yet. It's a quiet year. We're just gathering together bits and pieces for songs. Next year is going to be a mega tour. I pack my suitcase in April and finish in November. After that, we'll see.

Your old friend Tony Iommi has talked about doing a solo album. Has he tapped you up to appear on it?
We've done a few projects over the years, but not this time, no. I've been so busy I've had to turn down so many things. I should get in touch with him.

Were you surprised to hear Deep Purple's *Child In Time* on the trailer for the new season of *Stranger Things*.
I don't know what you're talking about.

***Stranger Things*, the Netflix show?**
I don't have Netflix. I don't have a television. So yes, in that respect it's a surprise.

New single The Line by UROCK featuring Ian Gillan is out now and is taken from the forthcoming UROCK album.

Ian Gillan: well past the age for songs about fast cars and loose women, he says.

> "Things move a little more slowly. If you've got a sense of humour, you can get by."

DENNIS DIRKSEN/PRESS

IRON MAIDEN
STEVE HARRIS
FORGING THE IRON

As Iron Maiden's driving force, bassist and main songwriter, **Steve Harris** has steered the band from pub gigs and demos to the world's biggest stadiums and multimillion-selling albums.

Interview: **Paul Elliott** Portrait: **John McMurtrie**

Iron Maiden's leader, bassist and chief songwriter Steve Harris recalls the band's formative years, from the creation of their unique sound to the making of their classic debut album, and the high-stakes gamble of firing singer Paul Di'Anno.

You formed Iron Maiden in 1975, but not on Christmas Day, as has been stated many times over the years.
It was a few months before Christmas. But there's been all kinds of other rumours about the early days. One bloke claimed he was in the band, and was on *Antiques Roadshow* saying he was the first drummer in Maiden. Absolute rubbish! Then he said we were going to be called Mountain Ash, or something like that.

"One bloke was on *Antiques Roadshow* saying he was the first drummer in Maiden. Absolute rubbish!"

Once you had decided on the name Iron Maiden, you designed the logo, which would become instantly recognisable all over the world.
One of the biggest lessons I ever learned was from one of my favourite bands, Genesis – the early Genesis, with Peter Gabriel. I had a denim jacket with the Genesis logo from [1972 album] *Foxtrot* on the back, the logo that curves over, and I had the fox's head. So I was mortified when they did [1973 album] *Selling England By The Pound* and changed the logo completely. And it was just a nothing logo. Really, as great as *Selling England By The Pound* was, the logo was awful. I thought: "What are they doing?" And I said to myself: "I'm never gonna let that happen. I'm gonna get a fantastic logo." Which we still have to this day. Of course, over the years we've been slagged off because the album artwork always has the same logo. But you know what? There's a thread running right the way through it that is really powerful. And that's a key lesson I learned.

What did you learn from playing covers in the early days of Maiden and previously in the band Smiler?
Back in the day, everyone was playing the same songs. You'd go to all these different clubs and they're all playing the same type of songs. So I played loads of covers in Smiler. But when we did covers in Maiden in the early days we always chose songs that were not well known.

The first Montrose album [1973] was a massive musos' album at the time. A great album. All these bands were playing stuff off that album, so we chose the second Montrose album, *Paper Money*, and the song *I Got The Fire*, and people didn't know it. Some people even thought it was one of our own songs, and we were playing a lot of our own stuff anyway.

From the start, Maiden had a distinctive, original sound.
Yeah, I agree. I don't think we sound like anybody else. And I think that's one of the reasons we got a following really quickly.

As the main songwriter in Maiden, did you always know what the band's sound should be?
People say that in hindsight, but at the time you're just sort of experimenting with different stuff. So it's just a natural thing that happened. What I knew I wanted was loads of melody, but heavy as well, and just good-quality songs.

You recently told *Classic Rock* that the first truly definitive Maiden song was *Phantom Of The Opera*.
I think when I did *Phantom* it was obvious that the style of writing that I had was very different to what people were used to, certainly what guitarists were used to. I didn't learn all the scales like they learned. I didn't want to. For guitarists, getting their heads around some of the things I wrote wasn't natural for them, and it's still like that these days. And yes,

FILIUS FORTUNAE

IRON MAIDEN
Killers
IRON MAIDEN

Not just any old Iron: Doug Sampson, Paul Di'Anno, Tony Parsons, Dave Murray and Steve Harris at the Music Machine in London, October 27, 1979.

> **"Eddie wasn't a preconceived thing. We knew we needed good artwork developed."**

Phantom was one of the first examples.

Also the drum stuff that I wanted to have in those songs was quite unusual, even on something that most people might think is a basic song. When Clive [Burr] first joined, he thought he was just going to come in and jam along and play and that was it. But he was like: "Bloody hell! These songs are really unusual, really different!" My songs had quirky bits in them, even the ones that they thought were straightforward. But it felt natural to me.

There were various line-up changes in Maiden's early years, but a turning point came when you brought Paul Di'Anno in. He had a powerful voice, a strong stage presence and a real swagger about him.

Paul was such a character. I think it might have been Geoff Barton [ex-*Sounds* writer and current *Classic Rock* contributor] who said that Paul had a certain… stable-boy charm. And that's quite a good, accurate assessment, really.

Paul once complained that Geoff's description made him sound like he smelled of horse shit!

Exactly!

Maiden's debut album is one of many classic albums released in 1980. It's well-documented that you were unhappy with its production, by Wil Malone, but it really does capture the band's youthful energy. And there are tracks on that album that still rank among Maiden's very best – not only *Phantom Of The Opera,* but also *Running Free, Remember Tomorrow* and the signature song *Iron Maiden.*

I did feel a little disappointed that the guitars weren't as big-sounding as they should have been. But yeah, the album has got a certain quality to it. We did the whole album in thirteen days, including the mixing. We were playing those songs live beforehand, so when we went in and did it we just played them live and got them down in one or two takes.

There's an essence to that first album. It's not really an angriness, it's going in there and just going for it. We were really just excited to be in the studio doing an album for the first time. We'd never done an album before. We did a demo tape but, I mean, it's not the same. So going in a proper studio, doing an album, that's a massive thing for any band when they're starting out. I think that's why that first album is so… adrenaline-fuelled, I guess you'd call it. And compared to everything else that was around at that time it's quite different, there's no question about that.

That album also had a cover at that set it apart – the snarling, menacing figure of Eddie, as painted by Derek Riggs.

Eddie wasn't a preconceived thing. We knew we needed good artwork, and it just developed. It's turned out to be amazing. Eddie represents Iron Maiden, but we don't have to be on the front covers. So many people have told me, especially in America, that they bought one of our albums flipping through the vinyl section – old-school – and seeing the cover and going: "Wow, look at that!" and bought the album without even hearing it. So it's done its job.

Did you do the same as a teenage prog rock fan?

I didn't really buy albums for the covers. But I did love buying albums. The excitement of buying an album, taking it home and reading the words and the credits – sometimes even before you played the music. That was a big thing. It's a shame that that's been lost, I think.

So we were on the back cover of the first album, second album, third album too, but not on the front. And I always thought, in future, if we have a future, that was always going to be a good thing.

Back in 1980, Maiden were still playing in some small venues – real sweat boxes like the Redford Porterhouse.

I remember the Redford Porterhouse really well, because Def Leppard came down to that gig and we had a good old night with them. They're a good bunch of lads. We still get on great with them now. I mean,

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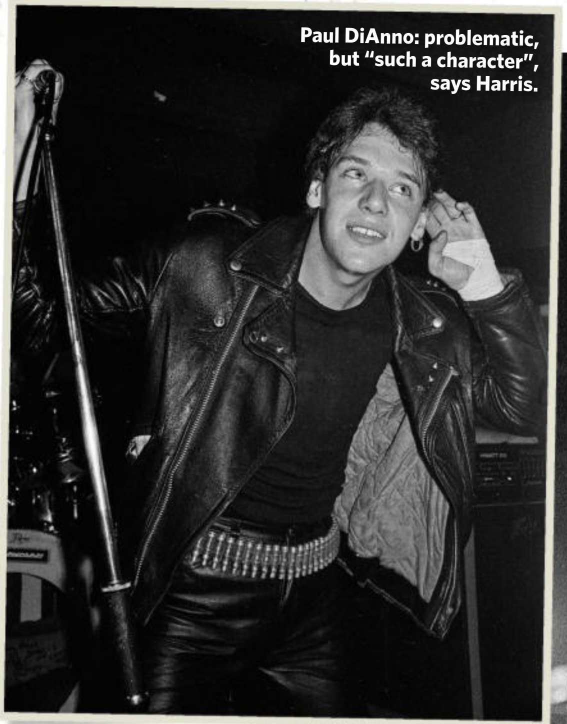
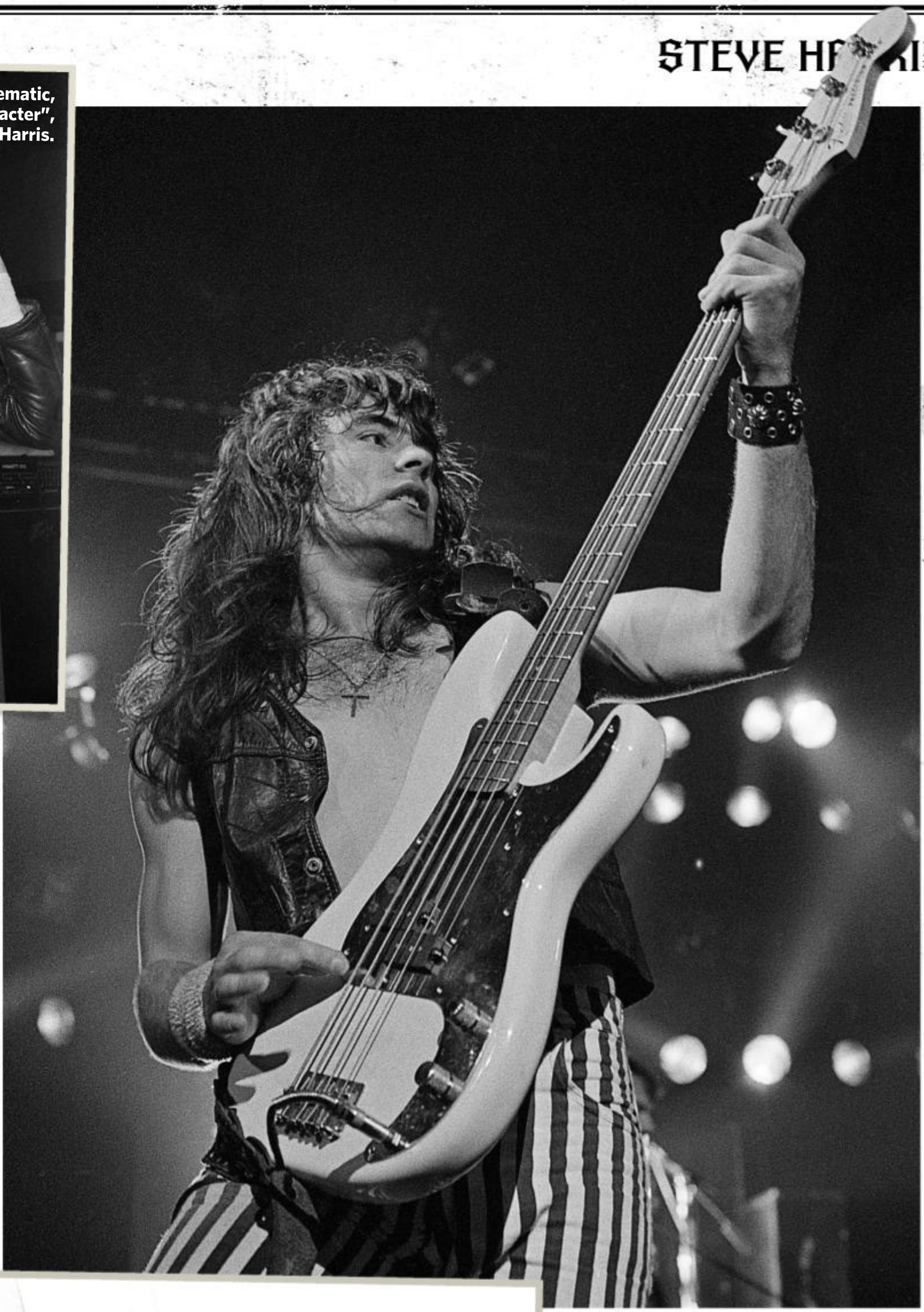


Paul DiAnno: problematic, but "such a character", says Harris.



they haven't really changed that much as far as just being good chaps.

In late 1980 you got your first major tour, opening for Kiss in Europe.
It was great. Kiss were very good to us, and it was amazing to play for European fans. In one respect we got lucky being in the right place at the right time to do that tour with Kiss. But also it was down to Rod [Smallwood, band manager]. Rod did a great job with that sort of thing. He's an ex-booking agent, so he was able to pull a few strings. He was able to do things that another manager might not be able to do.

So it was just a case of doing the right stuff, and it worked. And obviously we had to work our arses off, which we did. So you get to do another album and another tour after that, and you carry on going. That's all any band wants to do – just to be able to play live.

For Maiden's second album, *Killers*, you had Martin Birch producing, who had worked with Deep Purple and Black Sabbath.
I think *Killers* was more representative of where we were at. With Martin Birch on board the sound was a lot more powerful.

You wrote every song on that album, with just two co-writes. Were you feeling a lot of pressure?
No, I never worried about that. I've always been very lucky with writing, because I've always been really prolific. So I've never had a problem.

***Killers* was the last album the band made with Paul Di'Anno. How difficult was it for you to fire Paul?**
It was a tough one, really tough. To a certain degree it's always been tough when it comes to that sort of thing. But having said that, he was given chances to put himself right. It's just one of those things.

Top: bassist, captain of the ship and main songwriter Harris.

Above: Bruce Dickinson and Harris fork about.

It's always a huge gamble for a band to change their lead singer. Was that a nerve-racking time for you?
Well, with these things you're never really that sure. It could go either way. But I remember being in EMI, when we did the second album, and thinking: "Are we ever going to really make a career out of this where I can actually do it as a proper job?"

Up to the third album, we didn't really earn anything. Everything that we earned, even publishing and everything, just went straight back in. So it enabled us to tour. And we weren't borrowing loads of money off the record company, which would have meant we'd be in debt for ever.

So for you failure was never an option?
It's like anything: if you invest in something for a long-term future, then you've just got to go for it. But there were no guarantees. We just had to hope for the best.

The Run For Your Lives tour returns to the UK with Iron Maiden headling a Maiden-curated weekend event at Knebworth Park, July 11, 2026. More info at: ironmaiden.com

IRON MAIDEN

BUILDING THE BEAST

By 1981 **Iron Maiden** had made a name for themselves, and second album *Killers* was a powerful statement of intent. But one cog in the momentum-gathering machine was a little loose and needed replacing. The replacement was Bruce Dickinson, and the result was transformative, as our exclusive extract from the band's *Infinite Dreams* explains.

“One of more enduring also-rans from the NWOBHM boom,” as *Kerrang!* magazine put it, Samson were spawned in 1977. They built a loyal live following and cracked the UK Top 40 in 1980 with *Head On*. Yet their existence was chaotic.

Singer ‘Bruce Bruce’ Dickinson admitted the band “made every mistake in the business”, and, despite an impressive showing at the 1981 Reading Festival, he was ready to quit in frustration. When tensions with Paul Di’Anno hit crisis point, Steve and Rod knew that a backup plan was essential and thought Bruce might well be one. They went to Reading for a proper look. Steve was impressed, so later that evening Rod talked to Bruce about potentially joining Maiden. Within days of his performance at Reading, Dickinson was formally offered the job. The following week, in Copenhagen, Di’Anno played his last show with Iron Maiden.

> **“We all had that feeling on *The Number Of The Beast*: ‘Nobody ever heard anything like this before.’”**
>
> **Bruce Dickinson**

Born in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, on August 7, 1958, Paul Bruce Dickinson grew up in a nomadic environment. “I didn’t have an unhappy childhood,” he noted, “but it was unconventional.” Sent to Oundle, a boarding school, he fell foul of bullies. “The lights would go out in the dormitory and fifteen kids would beat the crap out of me. It was pretty horrible… but you build up this shield of mental invulnerability.”

There was one parental lesson that the young Dickinson took to heart: ‘Have a go at everything, even if you’re no good at it.’ He had a passion for military history and fencing, a sport in which he would later earn international recognition. But hearing *In Rock* by Deep Purple sparked an epiphany. Captivated by Ian Gillan’s soaring, neo-operatic voice, he said: “Ian was a big vocal hero of mine. There was Ian Gillan, Arthur Brown, [Jethro Tull’s] Ian Anderson… they all had a ballsy tenor, extended baritone.” Singing, he realised, would shape his future.

Expelled from Oundle (reputedly for urinating in the headmaster’s dinner), Bruce returned to the family home and formed a band. He joined the Territorial Army for six miserable months, then told his parents that he intended to study for a degree before committing to the military. “That was what they wanted to hear,” he noted, “so that was my cover story.” He read history at college and played in bands in London. After impressing at a pub gig, Bruce was approached by guitarist Paul Samson. One rehearsal later, he was in. He didn’t return to university.

Billed – to his annoyance – as ‘Bruce Bruce’, after a *Monty Python* sketch, the singer never felt he fitted into Samson: “Some of them just wanted to have a good drink, a good shag and take some drugs, and I found that really, really difficult to relate to.” He also had doubts about the music: “I wanted to be a cross between Ian Anderson and Ian Gillan with crazy notes and great lyrics and drama… I didn’t want to be some knock-off punk singer.”

Bruce encountered Maiden when the bands shared a bill with Angel Witch at the Music Machine in Camden in 1979. They were, he marvelled, “absolutely raging on stage! And I remember thinking: ‘Oh my god, what we could do together!’”

Bruce launched himself into Iron Maiden with passion. He made his stage debut on October 26, 1981 in Bologna, Italy, where the band set up a few shows to get the band ‘feel’ before the all-important next album. They ended the year with a triumphant secret gig, billed as Genghis Khan, in their East End home from home, the Ruskin Arms. Bruce’s relationship with Steve Harris wouldn’t always be smooth, but

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SIMON FOWLER/AVALON

A trooper: Bruce Dickinson during his first ever concert with Maiden on the Killer World Tour, at the Palasport in Bologna, Italy, October 26, 1981.

the bassist was impressed with the new recruit: "He's totally professional… looks after himself, wants to go out there and be the best. That's all you can ask from any frontman, really. We got lucky with him."

There were some major moves behind the scenes, too, as Rod's close friend and business partner Andy Taylor joined to deal with Maiden's burgeoning business affairs.

All guns blazed for album number three. "We were on a high throughout the writing and recording of *The Number Of The Beast*," Bruce recalled. "Everybody was just delighted. There was no stress around that album at all… We were just having so much fun."

Nonetheless, with their most demanding tour to date scheduled to begin in February 1982, the band was under pressure to deliver. There was also the question of how fans would react to a new face at the front.

With New Year festivities barely behind them, Maiden returned to London's Battery Studios, where they had recorded *Killers*. They had little more than a month to create a follow-up. And once again Martin Birch was on the desk.

"We put ourselves purposely under pressure," Steve recalled. "We just allowed ourselves a specific period of time for writing… We're not a band that writes twenty songs and uses ten. Once we've got enough, we stop."

This brutal treadmill was fundamental to Maiden, even at the height of their fame: "We just went straight in, did the album, [then] straight into rehearsal, straight on tour."

Bruce's operatic range provided the freedom to explore more complex music, and Martin Birch's crisp production gave greater definition to Dave and Adrian's guitars. "What I do is pretty simple," Birch remarked, "but the fact that I'm used to the bands I have worked with helps me to know instantly what they want… even if they don't realise it clearly themselves."

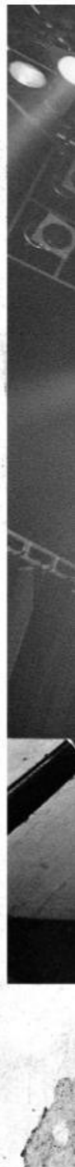
"He helped us bring out the power in each song," agreed Dave, "and he knew how to get the best out of all of us."

Songs that became fan favourites included *Children Of The Damned*, inspired by a 1964 horror movie; *Hallowed Be Thy Name*, a seven-minute epic about a man facing execution; the title track, inspired by the Robert Burns poem *Tam O'Shanter*; and of course *Run To The Hills*. Memorable moments were also provided by Adrian with the sleazy *22 Acacia Avenue* and the joyful *The Prisoner*, both written with Steve.

Determined to drop jaws, Maiden upped the visual ante with each new release and tour. On *The Number Of The Beast*'s extravagant panorama, Rod said: "The art was originally intended for the *Purgatory* single with Paul, the basic idea being to question who is pulling whose strings, Eddie or the Devil? It was meant to be very tongue-in-cheek. But the art that Derek came up with was so brilliant we decided to keep it for the next album, and we asked Derek to come up with a new artwork for *Purgatory* on a similar theme – the Devil morphing into Eddie. So we basically had the new album art before the band even started writing it. And then Steve came up

Top: Maiden cool off after a show in 1982.

Above: Ritchie Blackmore pops in to say hi during Maiden's 1982 tour.



MAIN: PG BRUNELLI/ICONICPIX; INSETS: ROSS HALFIN x2

Iron Maiden at Hammersmith Odeon, London on the Beast On The Road Tour, March 20, 1982.

GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

> **“We knew we had a really strong album and we knew we had a really great singer in Bruce, but you just never know how people are going to react.”**
>
> **Steve Harris**

with the song *The Number Of The Beast* and, as they say, the rest is history.”

The Number Of The Beast’s cover art became one of rock’s most iconic artworks, inspiring an entire metal aesthetic. Maiden’s Eddie-centric image also had a huge influence. Marketing mogul Gene Simmons assured Rod: “Iron Maiden is going to take over from Kiss as the biggest merchandising band in America.” More tenacious than the Terminator, Eddie has stamped his mark on every album and tour.

Fanning the flames for *The Number Of The Beast*, *Run To The Hills* broke free on February 8, 1982 and was the band’s first UK Top 10 single, peaking at No.7 and selling over 250,000 copies. As with many Maiden lyrics, its subject matter was unusual, concerning the conflict between Native Americans and the US Cavalry. Complementing Riggs’s album artwork, the single saw Eddie battling Satan with a tomahawk. The B-side, *Total Eclipse*, was so banging that Maiden would rue booting it off the album in favour of *Gangland*.

Run To The Hills proved Iron Maiden were becoming a juggernaut. That was confirmed when the album topped the UK album chart in April 1982.

But life for a chart-topping band could be unglamorous, as Adrian discovered: “To get us all in one vehicle, we had an ancient beaten-up bus for the tour, which had broken down. We were pushing it, trying to get it to start, when someone told us: ‘Your album’s just gone to No.1!’”

Steve recalled: “I asked the driver what was wrong with the bus, and he replied in a thick Norfolk accent: ‘Well, it were working an hour ago.’”

A surprise awaited when The Beast On The Road Tour crossed the Atlantic in May. Taking the album’s content and artwork at face value, some Christian groups denounced Maiden as Satanists. So persistent was this falsehood that when (subsequently disgraced) televangelist Jimmy Swaggart published *Music: The New Pornography* in 1984, the book’s cover featured Steve. “It was mad,” the bassist marvelled. “They completely got the wrong end of the stick.”

The band’s second tour of North America in the summer of 1982 saw them playing large arenas as special guests of Rainbow, supporting Judas Priest, and finally playing stadiums with the Scorpions. Despite a total lack of the radio support generally considered crucial in the US for any success, *The Number Of The Beast* peaked at No.33 Stateside – 45 rungs higher than *Killers*, thanks largely to the live performances. In Britain the album went gold in less than a month and stuck to the chart for 31 weeks. Success spread around the world, with Top 10 placings from Austria to Australia.

More significantly, *The Number Of The Beast* reconfigured the face of metal. “It changed everything for us,” enthused Metallica’s Lars Ulrich. “It showed what metal could be.”

Thirty years after its release, a public poll hosted by HMV ranked it the best British album of the past six decades, beating The Beatles, Pink Floyd and Queen. “Astonished and delighted,” was Bruce’s reaction.

IRON MAIDEN
INFINITE DREAMS
Thames & Hudson

Iron Maiden – Infinite Dreams: The Official Visual History is published by Thames & Hudson and available now. Extract reprinted with kind permission.

IRON MAIDEN
BRUCE DICKINSON
INTO THE FIRE

Becoming a band's new singer is never easy. But when he saw Maiden play, **Bruce Dickinson** knew they were the band he needed to be in – and that he was the singer they needed.

Interview: **Paul Elliott** Portrait: **John McMurtrie**

In 1981, Bruce Dickinson became the fourth singer to front Iron Maiden, after Paul Mario Day, Dennis Wilcock and Paul Di'Anno. Prior to joining Maiden, Dickinson spent two years as lead vocalist with Samson, another band that rose from the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal.

What were you doing before you joined Samson?
I was singing in college bands. It was semi-pro, gigging in pubs. We did a gig at the Prince Of Wales in Gravesend, and that's when the guys from Samson came along to check me out. When they offered me the job, sometime in 1979, I was doing my last few months in college. I was still doing exams then, my history finals.

Do you have fond memories of those early days you spent in Samson?
Completely! Totally! I didn't have a home to go to for most of that time.
I remember there were plenty of groupies around, but it was a benevolent scene, everybody looked after each other. I slept in a squat in the Isle of Dogs [in London]. That was where Maiden shot the video for [1984 single] 2 *Minutes To Midnight*. They wanted this grim location for the shoot, and I said: "Hey, I used to live there!"

> **"Watching Maiden was like getting hit by a runaway train. I knew then that I should be singing for that band."**

Samson's leader was guitarist Paul Samson, but there was another big personality in the band when you joined – drummer Barry Purkis, aka Thunderstick, who spooked audiences by wearing a balaclava on stage.
I heard that he [Thunderstick] worked as a grave digger before he was in Samson. He liked the theatrics of bands like The Residents and Kiss. Paul was more serious about it, but I was like a prankster on stage back then. What I was doing was almost like street theatre.

Did you believe at the time that Samson could make it big?
Well, the band had a lot of strengths, but also a lot of weaknesses. We had some interesting songs that sat slightly outside of the metal genre. But as players it was very hit-and-miss. Thunderstick's drumming was – how do I put it? – somewhat eccentric. Samson also had absolutely dreadful management. At one point our booking agent sacked himself! That was during the Survivors tour [1979]. So I booked us a twenty-two date tour, because I had some experience with that, having been Social Secretary at college.

There was an odd mix of personalities in the band.
Everybody had a different drug of choice. Paul was a big stoner. I remember one time he got busted in Grimsby, wearing a bowler hat and rolling a joint outside the nick! I was the drinker. The bassist [Chris Aylmer] was into speed. Thunderstick liked downers. There was one gig where Thunderstick fell asleep but fell against a wall and carried on playing!

You were sporting a terrible moustache back then.
That moustache was dodgy. Very dodgy. It took ages to grow and it still looked rather sad.

In early 1980, Iron Maiden opened for Samson at the Music Machine in London.
Watching Iron Maiden was like getting hit by a runaway train. I knew then that I should be singing for that band.

Later that year, Samson's album *Head On* – your debut album with the band – was released.
Before that album it was all a bit pub rock. I skewed the whole thing over to metal. But then we insisted on

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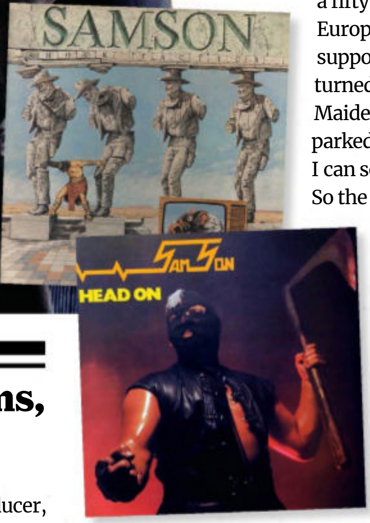
Above. Samson. (L-r) Chris Aylmer, Bruce Dickinson, Paul Samson, Thunderstick.



“*Killers* is one of my favourite Maiden albums, despite the fact that I’m not on it.”

producing the album ourselves. There were clouds of ganja smoke twenty-four hours a day. It was not conducive to a profound sense of judgement.

We were in Ian Gillan’s studio. He was my hero. One day he walks in and cops all of my Ian Gillan impersonations! “Pretty good, aren’t you?” But there was so much smoking and drinking going on, I thought: “I’m gonna be sick!” I was throwing up for at least forty-five minutes before Ian kicked the toilet door in and put me in a taxi home.

1980 was a watershed year for the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, with debut albums from Maiden, Def Leppard, Diamond Head, Girlschool and more. Who did you view as the leaders of that scene?
Maiden cornered the market. Praying Mantis were quite good. Def Leppard disappeared to America almost immediately. It was obvious that Leppard were going to turn out radio hits. But all those other bands never quite got out there. It’s the same with any scene – only two or three bands ever make it out.

In January 1981 Samson recorded their second album, *Shock Tactics*, and this time it wasn’t a DIY production.
We got a proper producer, Tony Platt, who’d just worked with AC/DC. Tony straightened out the eccentricity of the band. He pulled a big chunk out of my voice that I didn’t know was there. I hated it, but everybody else loved it.

While Samson were working on *Shock Tactics*, Iron Maiden were in an adjacent room at Battery Studios, recording their second album, *Killers*, with producer Martin Birch, who had previously worked with Deep Purple, Rainbow and Black Sabbath. In a previous interview with *Classic Rock* you recalled how Martin had invited you to listen to an early mix of *Killers* and that it blew you away.
It floored me! *Killers* is one of my favourite Maiden albums, despite the fact that I’m not on it. I wish I had been on it, because *Killers* actually has got a load of stuff that I would have loved to sing. For me, *Killers* was like a really updated version of bits of *Deep Purple In Rock*. That vibe, you know? It wasn’t bluesy, but a song like *Wrathchild* has got amazing groove to it. And the title track, *Killers* - wow!

There’s some stuff on *Killers* which is so atmospheric. I love it! When I hear that album now it really takes me back. I’m just transported back to a world of… bedsit luxury! Ah, those smelly bed sheets!

After seeing Maiden at the Music Machine, had you always kept one eye on how their career was progressing?
Oh, I knew how they were progressing. It was fucking obvious! Maiden were doing a fifty-date headline tour of Europe, and Samson were supposed to support them. We turned up in our transit van, and Maiden had two articulated lorries parked outside. I thought: “Ah, I can see where this is going.” So the different trajectories were obvious. And the tour [Samson’s involvement] got pulled at the last minute – our record company ran out of money and couldn’t pay for us to do it.

By the summer of 1981, Maiden were having problems with their singer Paul Di’Anno.
They were not happy. The cracks were starting to show, and people were starting to talk about it.

In Samson, meanwhile,Thunderstick was gone and they had a new drummer.
Thunderstick was a character, and I liked that about him. But he did get a bit OTT. So Thunderstick left, and then we got Mel Gaynor, a very good drummer who went on to join Simple Minds. But it wasn’t like a band any more.

Is is true that Ritchie Blackmore asked you to join his band Rainbow before you got the approach from Maiden?
There had been rumours of me joining Rainbow. That was partly true. Ritchie Blackmore’s roadie had called me in the middle of the night, saying: “You want the gig?” But I never heard from him again.

August 29, 1981 was a pivotal day in your life. At the Reading Festival on that day you performed with Samson then afterwards met with Maiden’s bassist Steve Harris and manager Rod Smallwood.
Samson’s performance at Reading was pretty good. But I knew it was time for

Below: Bruce Dickinson with Samson at the 1981 Reading Festival - his last performance with the band before joining Iron Maiden.

MAIN: FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS; INSET: JUSTIN THOMAS/ICONICPIX

All smiles and drinking to a bright future with their new singer on board: (clockwise from top left) Adrian Smith, Steve Harris, Dave Murray, Bruce Dickinson, Clive Burr.

ROSS HALFIN

IRON MAIDEN
RUN TO THE HILLS
IRON MAIDEN
THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST
IRON MAIDEN
THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

a change. Rod and Steve met me at Reading, but at that point they were still touring with Paul Di'Anno. After a while, Rod said: "Come back to our hotel room, we need to talk in private."

Before I joined Samson, there had been this incident where the Maiden guys thought that Samson had fucked them over. So Rod always said he didn't want anyone from Samson in Maiden, even though Clive [Burr, drummer] had already gone from Samson to Maiden before me.

When we got to Rod's hotel room, he said: "We're thinking of changing our singer. So we're offering you the chance to audition." I said: "Before we start, you know that if I audition I'll get the gig. I want it. And it's exactly what the band needs. But be warned – I'm gonna be a pain in the arse. I'm not a clone of the other singer, and I'll have ideas of my own, ideas that Steve might not like." Steve just said: "Fine!"

What did you remember about your audition with Maiden?

It was weird. They rehearsed with me up in Hackney, with everybody sneaking in. Not that anybody in Hackney actually gave a shit! I turned up and Steve wasn't there, he hadn't arrived yet, but everybody else was. And I looked around and everybody was just… not happy. Everybody was just down. And I was thinking: "This is going to be rough."

But we started bashing through some songs that we knew, and it turned out we all knew half of every fucking rock song on the planet. We had a go at a bit of AC/DC, a bit of Purple – *Woman From Tokyo* then *Black Night* – and so on. And suddenly we were all smiling and having a laugh. Then Steve turned up. We went: "Right, let's have a bash at some Maiden songs." We did three or four Maiden songs, but I'd learned all of them. Clive had been Samson's drummer, so it felt very natural. But then I had to wait two weeks so that they could deal with Paul [Di'Anno] after the last gigs in Scandinavia.

On a musical level, did you and Steve Harris have an instant connection?

Our influences were – and are – broadly very similar. All the early Sabbath stuff, plus the Dio Sabbath stuff, plus Thin Lizzy, Purple. Steve loved UFO. Both of us were major Jethro Tull fiends. Steve loved Genesis. I was into Van der Graaf Generator and Arthur Brown. Ditto Peter Gabriel after Genesis. I was less of a Genesis fan. Steve's a big Golden Earring fan. But the big ones, we had in common, all those influences.

Was it difficult for you to leave Samson?

I never made any money at all in Samson, but when I tried to leave to join Maiden I was sued by Samson's management for £250,000. We eventually got the figure down to £40,000. I borrowed the money off Maiden and bought myself out, and bought Samson out. I, and they, were free to walk.

When you quit Samson, how did Paul Samson react?

I think he'd seen it coming. Paul wanted to take the band in more of a blues direction. He loved ZZ Top, stuff like that. I wanted it much more metal. It was never going to last.

Looking back, what was Samson's peak with you in the band?

Commercially it was *Head On*. Artistically, *Shock Tactics*.

Did you reconcile with Paul Samson before his death in 2002?

Paul got pretty upset when I joined Maiden. I never knew he was ill until his girlfriend contacted me. But I saw him a couple of times before he passed away. The main thing was we did some good stuff together. Paul was a great guitar player and a good songwriter. ●

A limited edition 40th anniversary double vinyl of Iron Maiden's Live After Death is released on Nov 28. Pre-order: ironmaiden.lnk.to/LiveAfterDeath40

MAN ON FIRE

Heartbroken and stricken with cancer, **Stephen Dale Petit** found his masterpiece in the shape of *Be The Love,* an album that burns with the urgency and creativity of a man on borrowed time.

Words: **Henry Yates** Photos: **Rob Blackham**

One Friday night back in August, my phone lit up with Stephen Dale Petit's caller ID. Nothing unusual in that: the Anglo-American bluesman doesn't use press officers, has little regard for office hours, and by this point is almost a friend. He asked me to stop what I was doing, check my emails, listen to the six-minute track he'd just sent me, then call him straight back. Seems important, I thought.

The song was stunning: a stately slow-burn lament topped by a molten guitar solo, with Petit acknowledging a litany of fuck-ups over his 56 years, but always cycling back to the titular phrase: '*I will do all that I can, I will strive to be a better man*'. When I returned the call, full of praise, the guitarist told me I was the first 'outsider' to hear the lead track from his new album *Be The Love*, which he believed was the album of his career. But when I asked why it had taken a half-decade to put out a follow-up to 2020's *Visions* – winner of *Classic Rock*'s blues album of the year – the conversation got heavy. For the past three years, Petit told me, he'd been fighting an aggressive cancer. Now, it was no longer a case of if, but when.

"I went through all this in 2017," he said. "Then it was five years of all-clear. I thought it was done. But at the end of November 2022 I got the call.

"I had a scan, which showed the tumour," he continues. "It's in a really difficult-to-access place. After my first chemo, when I began easing back into *Be The Love*, I thought to myself: 'Well, if this proves to be my last album, let's pull out all the stops and make it a masterpiece.'"

To those who have followed his studio records since 2008's *Guitararama*, Petit is perhaps the most electrifying roots player of the post-millennium. Once dubbed a 'blues hooligan' – he likes the tag – the bandleader respects the genre's history and dogma but rips it up anyway, giving this often de-fanged genre back its hair and teeth.

What few realise is that there's a whole tangled backstory. When I first spoke to Petit, I assumed he was a well-preserved British punk; he's got the trademark 100 Club sneer and highly quotable lip. In fact he came up in Huntington Beach, California, and had his epiphany at the seaside city's Golden Bear nightclub.

"It was magical," he recalls. "But I was full of piss and vinegar. I wanted to get on stage with BB King. I remember Albert King once let me on his bus. He was sat in the driver's seat with his corncob pipe. I wish there were iPhones back in those days."

Petit's long association with London, though, began when he arrived in the late 80s, hoping to find a little of the same mojo that birthed the blues boom. "[Cream's 1967 album] *Disraeli Gears* still resonated with me as a teenager, and it had been out for decades. It was punk as well. London was a whole different thing – plus the weather. But I'm not interested in lifestyle and luxury. I've always put music first."

Petit's early years in London brought fantastical highs and lows that made him take a hard look at himself. Always good at making connections – his career hook-ups include Ronnie Wood and the Black Keys – he was brought into Pretty Thing Phil May's all-star band, sharing an amp with David Gilmour for the first gig. But by the millennium he was a mess and practically homeless ("Am I just going to be a drug addict?" he asked himself before seeking help. "Is my passion going to be washed down the toilet?") Wary of the "minority percentage of nutcases", he wasn't thrilled at the prospect of busking on the Tube. But cranking up his amp and getting an honest reaction proved rejuvenating – and financed *Guitararama*.

His sixth album, *Be The Love* is indeed a masterpiece – but not the one you're expecting. With Petit recalling: "There was a lot of throwing myself off a cliff", the opening and closing tracks – *Gift Horse* and *Low And Tight* – are the only true-blue tracks among glistening ballads (*Diamond*), Eastern-tinged psych-rock (*Cherish A Ghost*) and the skin-shedding, seven-minute *Sky Scraper*, which flips from 1960s jangle to rampant funk. "The song was chief," he says.

He's quick to credit co-producer Vance Powell, arranger Charlotte Glasson, and the chemistry with drummer Sam Walker and bassist Jim Mortimore, and old friend Eric Clapton's guest solo on *A Better Man* is among the greatest modern acts of God. "It's fucking insane, the way he's picking up on counter-melodies. Eric is a player where his solos are different night by night. On Friday it's like: 'Fuck, that was great.' On Saturday you're dribbling and forgotten your name."

"I'd love to look back in five years or whatever and think: 'Oh, what a f**king drama queen.'"

But those happy sessions don't mean *Be The Love* comes from harmonious times. It was written before his diagnosis, and he says the album's flashpoint was the acrimonious end of an eight-year relationship. Today, Petit doesn't say the name of the woman, who played bass in his band, so we won't either.

"I'd gone from an eight-year relationship to no girlfriend, no band," he reflects. "I'm not even sure what happened, exactly. We both played our part in pushing the relationship off a cliff. My experience is that women generally know where they're jumping before they jump. And she ended up with someone who does vintage jump-blues, astonishingly well. So the initial break-up was quite hairy. It's like: 'She's left the band and she's got a guitar player who she rates, and she thinks you're not all that!'

"I loaned my studio speakers to her, and she disappeared with those too. So I had to collect them. The whole process was just another humiliation, y'know?"

At least the music came fast, he says.

"A primal scream is what happened. The lyric of *Cherish A Ghost* is true. I cried walking down the street. I cried on the bus. I cried at the Tesco checkout. I remember playing that song for Walter Trout, in his sitting room. He was frustrated because he didn't know how to help me. The simple way to say it is that I had a breakdown. But what we get with this album is a break*through*."

It's true. Listen hard and the tone relents on *Be The Love*, with Petit remembering the good times on *Low And Tight* ("The kissing, the sex, the hanging out…"), before moving on with *Sky Scraper* ("It's a song of hope, about a new person"). Finally, he gave the album its magnanimous peace sign of a title. "You end up sounding like some sixties hippie, an ancient philosopher, or some religious proselytiser – and some people might think 'nutjob' as well. The relationship was over. But I reached this place where I thought: 'Well, behind it all is love…'"

A difficult question, then, purposely saved until last. Does Petit anticipate he'll make another album? No sentimentalist, he gives a throaty laugh and says: "I have to stay alive first!" Then he pauses a beat. "I'd love to look back at that comment in five years or whatever and think: 'Oh, what a fucking drama queen.' I'd love to be able to do that."

Be The Love (reviewed on p.75) is out now via 333 Records.

ERIC CLAPTON: LUKE GLAZEWSKI

TRAVIS SHINN/PRESS

QUIET RIOT

On his third Mammoth album, **Wolfgang Van Halen** raises his playing, singing and songwriting game, in the process channelling recent tours with A-listers, meeting legends and years of personal demons.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Wolfgang Van Halen has the words 'play play' written on his right arm. One in blue, one red, scrawled as if in biro. Slicker tattoos of Moon phases and the logo of his band, Mammoth, are positioned more prominently, but that scratchy little message carries a special weight. It's his father's handwriting, transferred from a Christmas card and now a permanent reminder to his son. An expression of joy, from one musician to another. Words to live by.

"He was being silly, and he wrote it with both markers to almost make it like it was a 3D effect," the 34-year-old grins, looking down at the words. "So I just use it as kind of a life lesson, so that if I'm playing guitar I can always see that, just to make sure I keep following it."

Sitting next to me on a sofa at Fender's HQ in Covent Garden, Wolf (as he introduces himself) comes over remarkably normal for someone with such A-list parentage. Black jeans, band T-shirt (Canadian prog-metal instrumentalist group Intervals, who opened for Mammoth last year), wedding ring, gentle laugh, no rock-star pretensions. Serious about music and his father's legacy. Comparatively less fussed about everything else.

It's easy to imagine him fitting in with the Alter Bridge/Slash 'family', of which he's now very much a part. In his twenties he played bass for Mark Tremonti's solo band. His touring guitarist in Mammoth, Frank Sidoris, also plays in Slash's Conspirators. Michael 'Elvis' Baskette (Alter Bridge's go-to guy, and two-time Slash collaborator) has produced all the Mammoth records. As we go to press, Myles Kennedy is on tour with them in the States – as the *support* act.

"That's *insane*, man," Van Halen shakes his head. "I'm gonna have to be on my A-game, because when you have fucking Myles Kennedy singing and playing guitar before you go on, you got to make sure you're good."

There are moments, though, when the 'ordinary guy' curtain is lifted – just a little. Quiet reminders that he's not just another bloke who started a band. His easy kinship with rock's top tier (Metallica, Dave Grohl, Maynard Keenan, the late Ozzy Osbourne…). His uncle Patrick, white-haired and baseball-capped, silent in the corner throughout our conversation, like a down-to-earth bodyguard. His calm but clear devotion to 5150, the studio made legendary by his father.

> **"I'm my toughest critic. Growing up in the public eye might have a lot to do with that."**

Now, though, Wolf is its custodian on his own terms. Most recently the third Mammoth album – *The End*, on which he once again sings and plays all instruments – was recorded there. He lives ▷

in the adjacent property with his wife Andraia, a software engineer. Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston and Steve Martin are among their former neighbours, high in the green, expensive reaches of Coldwater Canyon in Beverly Hills. When he's not on tour, Wolf rarely leaves the place.

"I live in my childhood home now, so the studio's right there," he says. "Yeah, I feel very protective over 5150. It's what I need to watch and protect, for the rest of my life now."

Since the first Mammoth album in 2021, Van Halen Jr's music has stood confidently apart from the band that made his family famous. Less 80s flash and fireworks, more brooding 90s grunge flavours thoughtfully spliced with metallic beef, subtle gear shifts and pop-perfect harmonies. Sounds that stir big feelings. Songs that stay with you.

But perhaps his roots do come through in subtle ways. There is a real taste of that inimitable Van Halen magic, for example, in *The End*'s title track: specifically the 40-second tapping solo that kicks it off. It's an incendiary moment. The same dizzying technique and groovy sense of fun that made Roth-era VH's *Hot For Teacher* so exciting. Its accompanying video, directed by horror heavyweight Robert Rodriguez, finds the band facing down zombies at a gig, plus cameos from Myles Kennedy (a bloodthirsty zombie), ultimate tough guy Danny Trejo (the surly doorman) and Slash (looking on nonchalantly, being cool – very on-brand). A team effort, hinged on the softly spoken Van Halen's uncompromising artistic standards, set for himself.

"It's been fun because we've had to play an acoustic version of it," he says, giggling nervously at the memory. "It's very funny to hear that, trying to do the tapping acoustically."

In the studio Mammoth (now minus the 'WVH', having resolved a trademark issue this year) might be Van Halen's sandbox, but live it's very much a band affair. Completed by the aforementioned Sidoris, guitarist Jonathan Jourdan, bassist Ronnie Ficarro and former Tremonti drummer Garrett Whitlock, they soar way beyond their deceptively straight, black T-shirted image – taking their frontman's hot-blooded, cleverly written songs and turning them into livewire events. Last year we saw them at a jam-packed Islington Academy. It was, comfortably, one of the best rock shows we'd seen in years.

"At the end of the day that's what matters to me more than anything. It's not about having a guy jumping around on stage and saying [adopts boorish rock star boom] 'Are you fucking ready!' It's about playing the fuck out of your instruments. Bands like Tool and Meshuggah, they will stand right there and they will destroy. That's what I aspire to be."

Typically they rehearse about two weeks ahead of a tour, polishing their chops in soundchecks to keep the tight-but-loose quality that makes them so fun and easy to watch. Is he a demanding boss?

"No, not at all," he replies. "I don't think I've ever actually said: 'Hey, you're playing that wrong.' I think it's important that they feel themselves in the material. So they always learn it themselves. If they have any questions on what exactly to play I'll tell them, obviously, but they're so good at what they do I never have to worry."

The wider upshot of this has been Mammoth becoming one of rock's most bookable acts. Foo Fighters, Guns N' Roses and Creed have all taken them on tours. On Metallica's 2023-2024 stadium run, Mammoth were the only support to play every show.

"They gave us a Perfect Attendance Award!" he laughs. "It's a plaque that has the pick from every show, because they did custom picks for the whole thing. So yeah, they're very cool like that." He smiles, as if he were talking about an elder brother's nice mates. "They're very sweet."

Originally he was supposed to join Metallica at the now legendary Back To The Beginning concert. In the end he had to pull out due to the event's changing rehearsal schedule, which clashed with Mammoth's tour commitments – i.e. opening for Creed on a big run of arena shows.

"I know at one time I was supposed to play *Sweet Leaf*," he says, of what he might have played on the day. "Another time I was supposed to play guitar on *Changes*. But, you know, it just didn't end up happening."

Seemingly his involvement with Ozzy Osbourne's Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction – at Sharon and Ozzy's request – took the edge off this ill-fated timing. At the ceremony he played *Crazy Train* with Tool's enigmatic vocalist Maynard Keenan, a huge hero of his. ("We hit it off and we text each other all the time now. I so badly want to visit his vineyard because he's super-passionate about that. My mom has made her own wine, she has a vineyard on her property. I want to bring her and tour his vineyard, it'd be fun.") Backstage, post-gig, he and Ozzy talked for 10 or 15 minutes, sharing unrepeatable stories from Van Halen's days opening for Sabbath.

"At first I was like: 'Was that good enough?!'" Wolf remembers. "And his exact words, I believe, were: 'It was bloody brilliant.' He gave me a hug. That meant everything. And I got him to laugh."

He has no regrets over those Creed shows. For a guy who cut his live teeth in arenas, playing bass in Van Halen, it was a nostalgic experience, returning to venues he hadn't visited since those days with his dad. Back then he was 15, facing the world on a nightly basis and acting as an anchor to a newly sober Eddie Van Halen.

> **"I feel a lot of protection and ownership over 5150. I don't see myself going anywhere anytime soon."**

"It's definitely a lot to have on your shoulders," he agrees, "and you certainly experience a lot. I was forced to grow up as quickly as possible, mentally, in that respect. But, you know, I wouldn't have it any other way. I was very happy I was able to share that with my dad.

"I almost feel most comfortable in sports arenas for shows," he continues. "Stadiums are huge and crazy, but to me the perfect rock show is in an arena, because it can still sound good and it's a controlled environment where the lights can really work and give a good show."

He's alright: Wolfgang Van Halen doesn't do anything by half measures.

Even so, his greatest kick comes from the venues Mammoth now sell out as headliners. Bigger and bigger theatres. People singing his songs. Playing with bandmates chosen because they got on brilliantly, who also happened to be first-class musicians. Their rider includes coffee, water, Gatorade and 'Uncrustables' peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Wolf doesn't drink ("I just didn't find much interest in it, and with my Indonesian roots I get that 'Asian flush' and it's incredibly uncomfortable"). It's a friendly set-up, between actual friends. They were all present at Wolf's wedding in 2023 – an intimate home affair.

It's all helped him relax into a role that's tremendously at odds with his personality; a quiet, introverted soul who might have been a drummer in another life.

Do you get nervous?

"Very nervous," he says, without hesitation. "Always. Usually I'm really bad with firsts. So the first time we're playing a new song, the first show of the tour. It'll ease out through the rest of the tour, but I'm still…" He considers this for a moment. "Yeah, I'm a nervous wreck all the time."

What helps you?

"*Nothing!*" he half-whispers, eyes wide, almost laughing. "I just have to push through it. I mean, when it's our gig and it's people who are there to see us, it's a lot more comforting. But sometimes

TRAVIS SHINN/PRESS

you just have to stuff it in your pocket and ignore it, which is really tough. Or you can try to harness it. I like to try and use that nervous energy for good, which you can do sometimes, but other times it's… it's tough. So you never really know. It's just a matter of doing it over and over again."

In September 2024, Mammoth were on a plane to Mexico for stadium shows with Metallica. Miles above ground and increasingly aware of the altitude he'd be singing at, Wolf fell into a panic attack. It set the tone for *The End*, taking the listener on a journey through different anxious headspaces, and different ideas of what 'the end' might feel like. Lows, highs, grey areas.

"I'd never in my life been freezing but completely drenched in sweat," he recalls, making eye contact with uncle Patrick, who goes to all their shows and was with him at the time. "It fucked me up. It felt like it was forever, but it was probably about a ten-minute thing. In hindsight it's hilarious, but during, very traumatic. I think that headspace – I'm already an anxious person – bled into the whole writing process."

What do you think you were scared of, besides potentially fucking up your voice?

"When I get like that it doesn't really matter. At any time, I can just freak out because something's gonna go wrong, or I'm gonna make an ass of myself, or I'm gonna ruin it, I'm gonna mess up, or, you know…"

He pauses, pulling back from the impulse to spiral downward that all naturally anxious people can relate to. For a moment you can see the strange, heightened few years he's had, hurtling through grief, judgement, success.

"I guess I am my toughest critic," he continues. "And growing up in the scrutiny of the public eye, since I was fourteen, I think might have a lot to do with that; issues that I've got to work on. I've been to therapy a couple times, I'm medicated, all that. So it's just a matter of working your way through it, being more comfortable in yourself, not needing that approval from others."

Making *The End* offered a safe haven. Recording took place in the 5150 studio, literally paces away from his house, with producer/musical co-pilot Michael 'Elvis' Baskette. He writes mostly at home, on the sofa with a guitar, in quiet spaces between tours and playing videogames or watching reality TV with his wife.

Unlike the first two Mammoth albums, *The End*'s tracks were demoed straight into instruments – as opposed to Logic audio software. It made for a more instinctive energy, and a willingness to run with unexpected gear changes that felt good. You can hear it in the epic yet gnarly swoop of *One Of A Kind*; the sassy Meshuggah-funk of *I Really Wanna*; the grungy blues stomp and blissed out harmonies of *Better Off*; the dreamlike, Soundgarden-meets-Alice In Chains heartache of *Happy*. All of which flowed in the studio he grew up in, crawling over amps and inhaling rock history.

"It's home, you know?" he shrugs. "So it feels very nice to be able to continue that musical legacy. You almost feel like it's a duty to fill the walls with music every year."

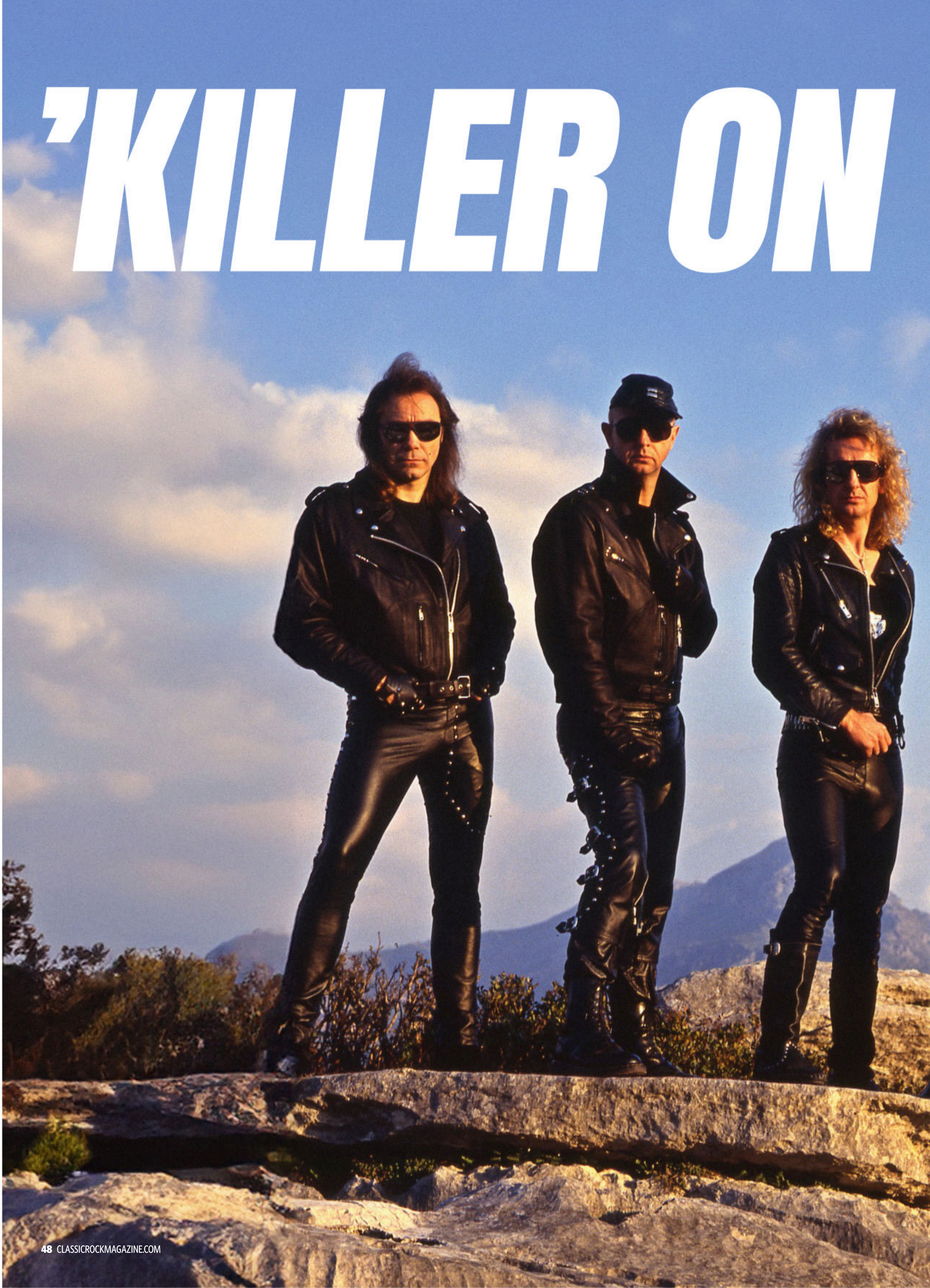
It must be a strange thing, carving your own, distinctive legacy in a place so imbued with your family's iconic moments. The only place he's ever lived. The home he returns to for holidays with his wife, when touring is finished. They haven't had a honeymoon yet, but hope to go to Japan off the back of a tour at some point.

"At this point it's where 5150 is," he says, of his enduring loyalty to Los Angeles, "and I feel a lot of protection and ownership over that, so I don't see myself going anywhere anytime soon."

We talk about his Christmas plans and his mum's place with her five cats (Bubba, Beau, Henry, Tigger and Batman). He hugs me goodbye and moves on to his next interview. Uncle Patrick quietly taps at his phone, looking at guitars on the walls around us. Later, as I transcribe my recording, he feels more like a comfort than a bodyguard. An emotional support. Something like a father figure to this guy with a uniquely challenging, inspiring past, and so much to offer on his own terms. His dad's voice, his message to 'play play', etched onto his arm forever.

The End is out now via BMG.

'KILLER ON



THE LOOSE

This classic encounter from 1990 finds **Judas Priest** bruised from poorly received albums, on edge just before the notorious lawsuit that delayed the release of their classic comeback *Painkiller* – a vindication that returned them to the top.

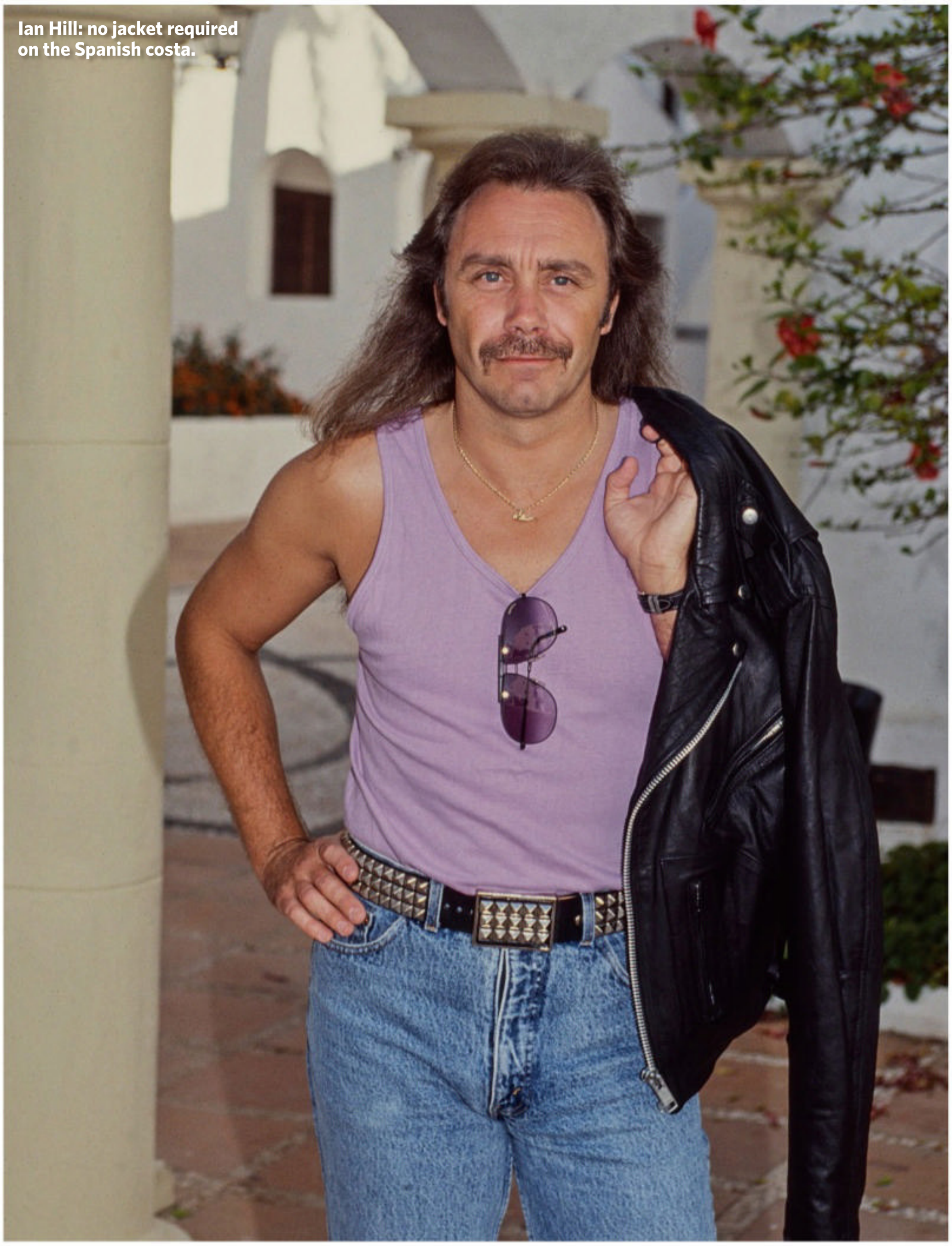
Words: **Sylvie Simmons**

RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

Author's note: *In July 1990 I flew to the Spanish city of Marbella to interview Judas Priest. It was two months before the release of* Painkiller, *their long-awaited follow-up to* Ram It Down, *an album that had gone gold in the States but got some stick from the UK press. Some metal critics thought it too polished. They had much the same opinion of Priest's new stage outfits on the subsequent tour. So Priest decided to take some time to come back with a killer album.*

They spent a lot of that time in Europe – recording in France and mixing in Holland – but stayed for what seemed like for ever holed up together in Spain. They'd done something similar when making 1986's Turbo, *staying under one roof in Spain to avoid distractions and to focus on work. This time there was the added task of getting to know their new drummer, Scott Travis, and planning a new live show. I also remember being summoned to interview Priest in an old isolated farmhouse in the ice and snow of northern Denmark, which was chosen for its distance from any rock musician-friendly temptations, but that's another story.*

By the time I got to Marbella, the new album was done and dusted. But the release had been delayed due to a bizarre trial that was under way in Reno in the US. Judas Priest had been accused of hiding subliminal messages in their 1978 album Stained Class *that led two suicidal young American men to shoot themselves. The trial was due to begin in August. A few weeks after the interview that follows, Rob Halford was planning to fly to the US and defend the band in court.* ▷



Ian Hill: no jacket required on the Spanish costa.

Marbella, Spain, July 1990

I'm sitting in the sun, headphones on, listening to the new Judas Priest album on my Walkman. It's called *Painkiller*, and it's *mighty*. "Yes, Rob Halford agrees, in that surprisingly gentle Brummy voice of his. "Really pulls the hair off your balls, this one." Off your head too, judging by his new hairdo and absence of his bleached ponytail.

We're in Marbella on the so-called Costa del Crime in a swanky villa on the beach. Their nearest neighbours, Priest tell me, are Baron Rothschild from the House of Lords on one side, and Hollywood icon Elizabeth Taylor on the other. Priest's villa, rented from a German princess, is all glass and chrome and shiny white furniture, with enough rooms to comfortably house Halford, guitarists Glenn Tipton and KK Downing, bassist Ian Hill and Scott Travis, Priest's new drummer and the band's first American full-time band member. Outside there's a swimming pool, a spotless lawn on which KK has been practising his golf swing, palm trees being hosed down by a gardener, and a clothes line in the back garden where Priest's undies sway in the breeze.

"Do I look miserable? I don't mean to. It's just this bleeding court case looming."

Rob Halford

It might look like they're on holiday, but the band have been working flat-out. Much of their time in Spain was spent in a valley in a part of southern Spain that tourists, movie stars and bank robbers and the like never see. With only each other for company, they were focused solely on getting the new songs and the new stage show right.

"We really disciplined ourselves," Halford says. "The whole time, we kept reflecting on what it is that people honestly think of when they think of Priest."

Which is?

"It's a combination of a lot of different things, admittedly. But the basic backbone of this group has always been traditional, almost vintage, British heavy metal music. It was on that understanding that we started to write. And the end result is what you've got on *Painkiller* - really hard heavy metal, fast-paced and powerful. There are no hits on there," he adds, laughing. "No singles whatever."

"We're giving the fans what they've been asking from us ," Downing butts in. "And it'll please us too, because we're not happy playing songs that are a bit of a compromise. We love this stuff. When we were putting this record together, we set out to complete what we'd threatened to do with *Ram It Down* – which was to make the ultimate, out-and-out Priest album. And that's what we've done. And," he laughs, "it could be the most successful failure we'll ever have!"

It took the best part of a year to write the songs, and almost the same again to fine-tune and record them. And there we all were thinking that, since we hadn't heard from them the past two years, they were sitting around in the sun or playing golf!

"Well I've never played golf, Sylv," Rob bristles. "It's Ken or Glenn who are the golf fanatics, and Ian. I did try and play it once but I couldn't get it together; it just wasn't heavy metal enough for me."

Okay, then, that for the past two years he was cruising into the sunset on his Harley-Davidson.

"Yeah, that's more what I do. Seriously, though, they think we're out there in our Rolls-Royces spending money hither and thither with our platinum American Express cards, and nothing could be further from the truth! We are, in one form or another, constantly active doing Priest stuff. It seems to have been like that since 1971 or whenever this thing began."

This thing began, of course, back in Birmingham, the sweaty, dirty belly button in the middle of England. But here they are, galavanting around the continent, (the album was recorded in Holland and in France – a French château no less), hobnobbing with the stars in Southern Spain. Hell, how do they keep the tough industrial Birminghamness through all this that made them what they are?

"It's in the blood," says KK. "When you put yourself in a little room with your guitar and records and all the stuff you need, you could be anywhere in the world, really, you just get lost in your own world. And it's in the blood and it comes out of you. That's what gives you the mentality to like this style of music in the first place, is your upbringing. A kid that's grown up with a silver spoon in his mouth or whatever is more likely to like Wet Wet Wet or Bros, that sort of stuff. The fact that we like metal is because we came a bit more ▷

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

A glum-faced Rob Halford, soon to defend the band in a court case in the US.

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

aggressively through life in the first fifteen years," he laughs. "You know the old saying? Wasn't brought up, *dragged* up. That's the way I feel about it anyway. It's *imprinted*. And not easily burnt off by a bit of foreign sunshine."

"At the end of the day," says Rob, "it comes down to your character growing up as a kid and all the things that mould you into the type of person you are. Nobody in this band's a poseur or a star. I'm only ever a hundred per cent comfortable when I'm in Walsall, my home town. I've just been there for the last couple of weeks."

Which is why you look so pale and miserable?!

"Do I look miserable? I don't mean to. It's this bleeding *court case* looming, pissing me off. I'm actually really *up* on this album and looking forward to doing the tour."

> **"It's not *commercial*. We're proud of our heritage and where we come from."**
>
> **KK Downing**

The court case you probably know all about, since it's been all over the newspapers. Five years ago two young Americans, Ray Belknap and James Vance, took their own lives with a shotgun while listening to Priest's album *Stained Class*. Their families hold the band and their record label responsible, claiming subliminal messages in the lyrics and codes hidden on the album sleeve (one portion of the cover picture, blown up to enormous proportions, shows a series of dots; join them together and they spell 'SUI', the first three letters of 'suicide' or so says one of the witnesses for the prosecution, a subliminal message 'expert' who's previously managed to find the word 'SEX' in the dots on a Ritz cracker) and Priest are leaving tomorrow to spend a month in Reno, Nevada, fighting the case. Why don't they treat the thing with the contempt it deserves and just ignore it?

"If we hadn't gone," says Rob, "they'd have said: 'That's an admission of guilt', they'd have tried us without us being there, and the prosecution, more than likely, without us defending ourselves, would have stung CBS for five or six million dollars, and stung us personally for a few million."

"They just want our money, is what they want," says KK. "To be guilty of what they're accusing us of – deliberately putting things on records to cause deliberate harm to people enough to make them commit suicide – is *money* the right punishment anyway?"

Right. You should be burned alive on an upside-down cross or something.

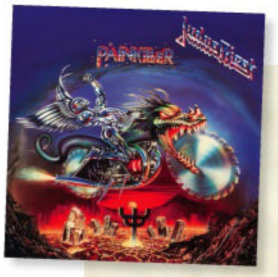
"Absolutely! I'm agreeing," he laughs. "But let's not put ideas into their heads! It's just total madness. And it is upsetting, because there's family men in the group. You don't want your aunts and uncles looking in the newspaper and reading. 'You'll pay for the death of our sons' with a picture of us underneath. Because people don't *understand*. It's entertainment, isn't it really? I've said time and time again that books and movies are far more influential than our music. Unless you're into Judas Priest and you want to hear that style of music, you wouldn't buy the record anyway. Like you wouldn't see *The Exorcist* unless you wanted to get scared. *I* wouldn't go and see *Love Story*, you know? It's unfortunate, because now people are going to be watching our every lyric."

That hasn't stopped Priest from writing songs on *Painkiller* that will upset *every* concerned parent, potential psycopath and Satanist-under-the-bed spotter.

"That's the good thing about this record," says Rob. "We let everybody see that we will not be intimidated and put on trial for everything we write. We maintain that censorship has no place whatsoever in any form of art. We have to get on with what we're about as artists and writers and not let this affect us. This court thing is a drag. And it only happens in America, which is really very, very sad, because we love that country dearly. I mean I've got a home over there and I continue to go there when I get the chance. America is still one of the very important places for Priest. And to have this hanging over our heads has to some extent changed my views and opinions on the America I believed in. It's a real shame."

As the first step in their plan to take all the people they like *out* of America and leave the place to the evangelists, the lawyers and the subliminal message gurus, Priest gave the job once held by Dave Holland to American drummer Scott Travis. So what's up? Is British metal in such a sorry state they couldn't find a British drummer? And will the first ever American in the band dilute the band's *Britishness* at all?

"Well for so many years Britain was looked upon, and for those of us who have



survived it is still looked upon, as producing the best heavy metal bands in the world," Rob says with a shrug. "It is a pity, isn't it? I mean, we really looked everywhere in Britain. But if you listen to the work on this record, there really was only one man for the job, and that was Scott Travis. He's absolute *dynamite*. I don't really feel his being one of those American-type people [laughs] has any bearing or influence on the way things turned out. The proof of the fact is the drums coming out of those speakers don't sound 'American', they just sound really lethal heavy metal drums, and that's all that really matters. Coupled with the fact that he's a really nice guy with a British sense of humour, which is useful, and that he's been a Priest fan all his life."

Scott Travis used to be in club bands in Norfolk, Virginia doing Judas Priest covers.

"I think it was '81, '82, Judas Priest played in Virginia," Scott says later, "the *Screaming For Vengeance* tour, and I was such a *fan*. After the band played I went to the hotel where I thought they were staying. I was trying to meet somebody in the band basically to try and get a job with the band!

"At the time I was just so determined that I didn't think how ridiculous it was that a group that's touring is going to take on this guy they don't know, in the middle of nowhere. They don't know me from Adam; I could be a psychopath! [Laughs.] I met Glenn Tipton and asked for his autograph and showed him some pictures of my drum set. When I saw the band I saw four guys up front that were really rocking and powerful, and I just thought that if the drums were a little bit more powerful it would kick the band up another level. Because to me the drummer is the backbone, especially in heavy metal. Anyway, I enquired how he liked his drummer, and needless to say nothing happened other than him giving me his autograph and talking for a few minutes. But it's ironic how it's turned out, isn't it?"

Dave Holland told them he was going to leave halfway through the *Ram It Down* tour. "He came to us," says Rob, "and said: 'Look, I've got to tell you, this is getting too much for me physically and mentally. I really can't give the commitment and dedication that being in Priest is all about. So I think at the end of the tour I'll do the gentlemanly thing and leave the band.' Which was a bit of a bombshell. But Dave has some fond memories of great years in Priest and we're still good friends."

"It was a family thing really," says KK. "His father died and he went through a long illness, and I think Dave felt his place after all these years was to be at home and taking care of his mum, which I understand. He just basically reevaluated the most important things in his life."

Did it make the rest of you revaluate? I mean, here you are, on your fourteenth record about to go on a year-long tour?

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

Different nationalities, same metal mindset: Brit guitarist Glenn Tipton (above left) and American drummer Scott Travis.

"I met Glenn Tipton and asked for his autograph and showed him some pictures of my drum set."

Scott Travis

"I thought about it", says KK. "It does make you think, certainly. But like I said before, it's in your blood, and whatever's going to happen's going to happen."

Is it hard coming up with new songs and ideas 14 albums on? Ritchie Blackmore, for one, has a theory that you're born with only so many songs, and every time you write one, another one's gone for good and the pile gets lower. Kind of like women being born with just so many ova, without getting too gynaecological.

"Actually," Rob laughs, "I've always felt that when you make an album it's a bit like giving birth. Because first of all there's the creation business when you're literally pulling things out of thin air, and then you go through the incubation period of making demos and so forth, and then the final stages are in the studio and it's your baby and it's getting bigger and bigger and bigger and it's going to come out into the world any day now. And suddenly it's out. It's in the shops and it's gone. It's no longer yours any more. It belongs to the world. And I always feel a bit deflated afterwards, after we come out of the studio. It's so intense when you're in there, and when it's all over it's like, that's that. It's like post-natal depression. This is really silly, but you started this! I think fortunately for Priest we've still got ▷

“Anyone fancy a round of golf?” Guitarist KK Downing looks forward to getting out of leathers and hitting the greens.

PG BRUNELLI/ICONICPIX

> **“The fact that we like metal is because we came a bit more aggressively through life in the first 15 years.”**
>
> **KK Downing**

some songs left and we’re still able to do it. This was a really fun album to do. We were working within a field that we’re comfortable with and we’re good at, and you’ve had all that experience accumulating over the years. Priest has become a bit of a finely tuned thing. It looks like a Rolls-Royce, but it’s got a Ferrari engine!” he laughs. “It really was enjoyable this time.”

The band co-produced *Painkiller* with Chris Tsangarides. Those of you who read the fine print on the album sleeve credits album will recognise him as assistant engineer-come-tape op-come-tea boy on *Sad Wings Of Destiny* back in 1976.

“Over the years,” says Rob, “Chris has become a very respected producer in his own right, and he always manages to capture this really traditional British heavy metal sound which it was important for us to get on this record. We wanted it to be a no-frills album, in the sense that we all played live together in the studio with a very limited amount of overdubbing and only two what you could call production pieces, *Nightcrawler* and *A Touch Of Evil*. The rest are very straightforward. So Chris came down to Spain and we had a meeting. Last time we saw him was years and years ago in Tokyo, and the great thing about metal is that when you make true friends, years can go by without seeing each other and when you come back together it’s like you’ve never been away. That personal relationship is very important in a studio, because making a record is a very emotional, volatile experience. I’m glad we did go with him, because it sounds killer.”

Is there any relevance to the title?

“Yes, because we think that’s what this stuff does – it kills your pain, it makes you feel good. We’ve said from day one, and continue to, that what we do and what hundreds of other bands like ourselves do is give people a great deal of pleasure and release and good therapy.”

“It’s just good, honest straightforward, stuff,” says KK. “It’s not *commercial*; we think it’s what our fans want and what British heavy metal is all about. We’re proud of our heritage and where we come from, and just because we wore the odd garment that was a different colour leather to black…” The sentence breaks off as I splutter on my beer at the memory of their *Turbo*-period designer togs.

“It was good for its time,” says Rob, defensively. “That’s the great thing about Priest, we’re always on the look out for something a bit unusual or different musically and visually.”

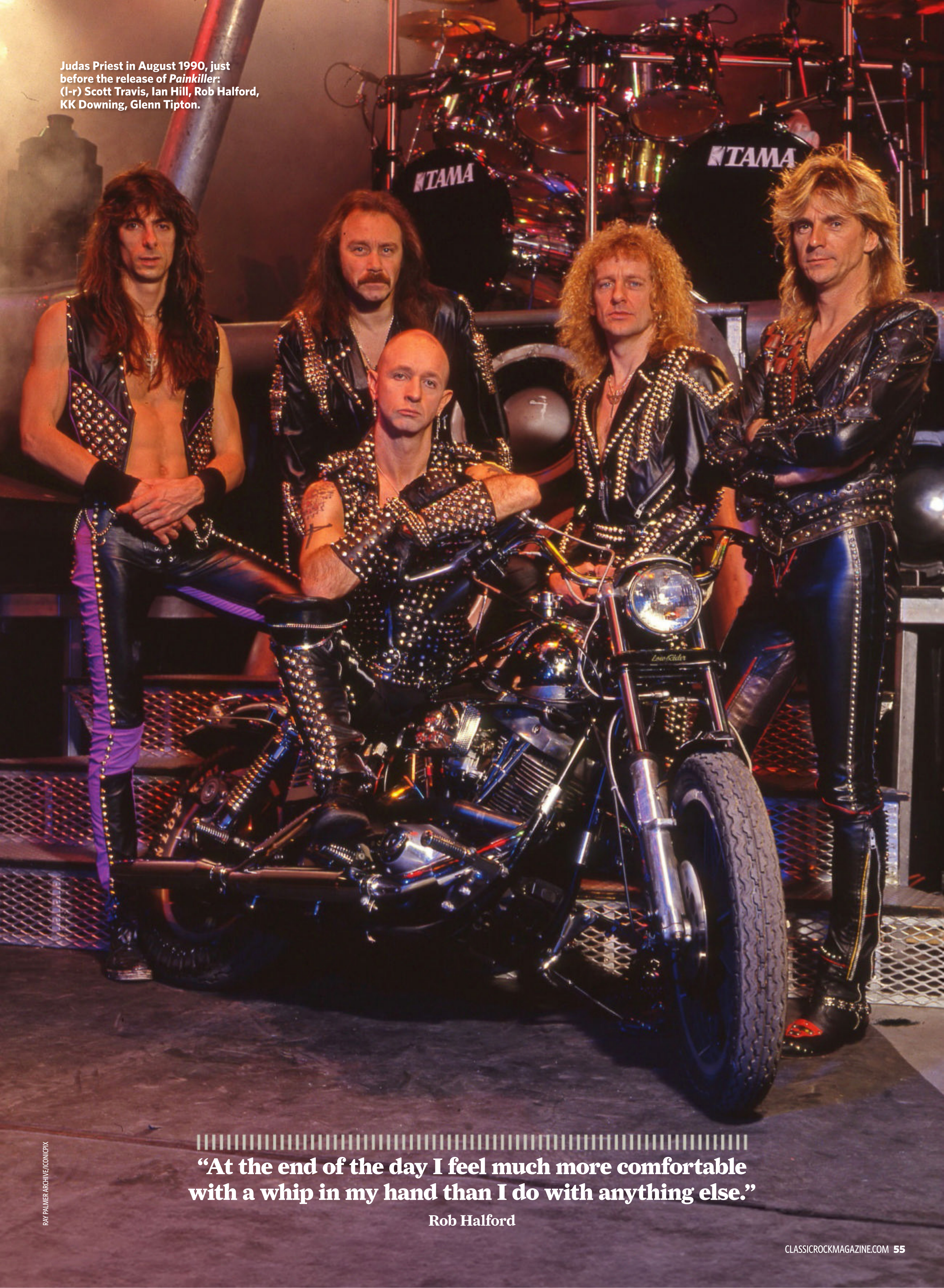
Well they certainly were different and unusual outfits. Didn’t Rob, *the* wearer of black studded leather as far as I’m concerned, feel a bit of a prat in all that pretty coloured stuff though?

“No I didn’t, Sylv,” he answers. “If I had felt like a prat, I wouldn’t have gone out there and stood in front of twenty thousand people in arenas in America! That’s just what we did then.”

“And I’ll have to say,” adds KK, “that the *Turbo* tour in the States was probably a highlight of the band’s career. It was very successful, it really was, and we actually achieved pulling in extra people, more people than just the heavy metal fans, but still playing the same songs and stuff. It was great at the time, that’s all.”

“But I must admit,” says Rob, “at the end of the day I feel much more comfortable with a whip in my hand than I do with anything else. The new stuff that’s being made for us now is what people probably identify with Priest. I think it’s going to look good, this tour. We’ve got a great stage set being made, and some fantastic songs to play on stage. It’s the first time Priest has been on the road for two years. We start in America in October and hopefully we’ll be touring Europe at the beginning of next year and we’re really pumped up for it again.

“I still get excited about it. Sometimes it’s a bit daunting. You think: ‘I’ve got to get through eight hours on the bus. Another Holiday Inn! But that soon disappears. I know exactly how good I feel when I’m on that stage screaming my head off to all those metal maniacs, and it’s the best feeling in the world,” Halford laughs. “I think I’m a big kid in a leather diaper, really!” ◆



Judas Priest in August 1990, just before the release of *Painkiller*: (l-r) Scott Travis, Ian Hill, Rob Halford, KK Downing, Glenn Tipton.

> "At the end of the day I feel much more comfortable with a whip in my hand than I do with anything else."
>
> Rob Halford

RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

Outriders

The term 'keeping it real' is a comfortable fit for **Whiskey Myers**. Unimpressed by and distancing themselves from the trappings and demands of the music business, they are for themselves and their fans. As singer Cody Cannon says: "I don't really think about status. We just do what we do."

Words: **David Sinclair**

© JAY BLAKESBERG/PRESS

Cody Cannon sits outside his workshop in Palestine, Texas, talking down the line from a phone propped on his porch. Behind him lies the flat expanse of East Texas, where hunting, fishing and small-town family life have shaped his every move. He holds a jug at his side. He is polite, measured, even friendly, but sparing with his words. You sense he would much rather be working on his Toad Thumper fishing lure business or tackling a job around the house than explaining himself to the music press.

We hooked up to talk about the new Whiskey Myers album, *Whomp Whack Thunder*, on which all 11 songs bear a single songwriting credit – in Cannon's name. The singer is quick to insist that this is not some new grand strategy. "Man, you know, John [Jeffers, guitar] writes, and Cody [Tate, guitar] writes," he says. "And we all get together and we have a lot of songs. And it just kind of worked out that way. It wasn't a plan or anything. It's just how it happened. No matter whose song it is, we always work together as a band. We're very democratic when it comes to the music and the art. If we have a disagreement, we always will play it each person's way. It's never dismissive. As far as the artistic vision is concerned, it's been real easy, man. We all kind of dig pretty much the same stuff. And it just works."

Although thrust into the spotlight, he seems a reluctant spokesman and you get the impression that a Cody Cannon solo album is an unlikely prospect. What has emerged instead is Whiskey Myers' most ambitious record yet – rich with layered guitars, Southern swagger, country-boy honesty and rock'n'roll conceits. The band performance is everything, and Cannon shrugs off talk of songwriting craft. "I try not to think too much and just channel it," he says.

> **"We were all blue-collar, and it shows in our music."**
>
> **Cody Cannon**

Whomp Whack Thunder opens with urgency. *Time Bomb* sets the pace, taut and hard-edged, its lyric about '*waiting around to explode*' tailor-made for the stage. But the album quickly broadens into more nuanced, ambitious terrain. Somewhere near the core lies *Rock 'n' Roll*, one of the record's defining moments. Over a slow, ritualistic groove, Cannon intones: '*I am the light that guides you whenever you're alone, I'm that pounding in your bones… /I am the Rolling Stones.*' It lands less like a boast than a meditation on what it means to carry the spirit of this proud but ageing genre in 2025.

"It's from the perspective of rock'n'roll itself," he explains. "You're imagining what rock'n'roll would say if it was a person."

The effect is humbling – an idea that's bigger than the band, bigger than all of us.

The Stones loom large in Cannon's imagination. When Whiskey Myers opened for them at Soldier Field in Chicago in 2019, it was less a career milestone than a personal benediction. "They're one of our favourite bands of all time," he says. "We all look up to them."

Then comes *Born To Do*, one of the album's most heartfelt statements. Stripped back and acoustic, it plays like a confessional, a middle-years band staring down its own purpose. But it also casts rock'n'roll as a semi-divine calling – not a job or a hustle, but something you were put on this Earth to carry out. '*I've had some good friends with me, and they've helped me make it through/They said we were doing what we were born to do.*'

The roots of Whiskey Myers run deep in East Texas soil. The original members of the band, which began in 2007, grew up together since they were kids. Cannon was raised in Neches, a tiny unincorporated community (population 219 in 2025), where his parents worked on the grounds of a nearby prison, and the rhythms of small-town life left a lasting mark.

"I had a lot of jobs when I was younger," he recalls. "Worked construction, did a bit in the oilfield, cut grass… whatever came along. I was good for anything. The only thing I was useless at was waiting tables." He pauses, grinning ruefully at the memory of this failure.

The other members of the band – guitarists John Jeffers and Cody Tate, bassist Jamey Gleaves, drummer Jeff Hogg and multi-instrumentalist Tony Kent – come from similarly modest, Southern-man surroundings, scattered across Palestine, Elkhart and Slocum. It is a world far removed from the music meccas of Nashville, New York or Los Angeles, and it shapes everything about Whiskey Myers' sound.

"We were all blue-collar, and it shows in our music," Cannon says, with a meaningful look. He leans across and spits tobacco juice copiously into the jug at his side. The band may have long since traded day jobs for rock'n'roll stardom, but the blue-collar mentality is still written into every note they play. Their audience, he adds, come from that same background – hard-working, family-centred, rooted in the values the band grew up with.

Comparisons with Lynyrd Skynyrd come easily: a group of friends turned brothers, playing like their lives depend on it. ZZ Top are another touchstone, fellow Texans who did things on their own terms until the world came to them. The Stones, meanwhile, hover as a spiritual reference point, swaggering proof that a band can endure for decades without losing its grip on the primal spark.

Whiskey Myers' lack of pretension may give the impression of a working band still dragging their amps down dirt highways, but in truth they are now a Big Deal in America: after more than 2,500 live shows, they've filled arenas and built a following that packs marquee venues coast to coast. The band's 2023 tour was 23 dates, with Rival Sons among several support acts, including a show at the James Brown Arena in Augusta, Georgia (capacity 9,000). Cannon, however, brushes off any talk of the band's continuing elevation in the scheme of things. "I don't really think about status," he says, in a tone that does not invite further discussion. "We just do what we do."

That credo takes different forms on *Whomp Whack Thunder*, and nowhere more powerfully than *Rowdy Days*. '*Yeah, it's true I've lived a life most people would dream about/But there's been so many times I've tried to burn it all down*,' Cannon sings. It is a time-of-life confessional, looking squarely at the temptations, the damage, and the redemption that follow in the wake of a rock'n'roll lifestyle. ▷

Whiskey Myers: the real deal.

'*They say I'm getting old*,' he says in the lyric, before turning the song into a statement of survival, gratitude and release: '*For once I'm finally free, my hands no longer shake, and my mind is at ease*.'

When asked if he feels "old" or, indeed, even middle-aged, Cannon bristles. "I'm in my prime," he shoots back. And *Rowdy Days* backs him up. Set to a sweet, slow-burning slide guitar, it feels like an anthem for the times – a song that could prove huge for the band.

For all their grit and swagger, Whiskey Myers are not a band lost in excess. Cannon, now a father of three, writes with the responsibilities of home life pressed into his songs. If *Rowdy Days* is his reckoning with the past, then *Monsters* is his reassurance for the future – a ballad born of late nights, sleepless children and the ordinary trials that rarely make it into the mythology of rock'n'roll. '*Don't worry about the monsters*,' he sings softly, '*they can't get to you.*' It is the simplest of comforts, but in Cannon's voice it carries the weight of a man determined to protect his family while admitting that shadows always lurk at the edges. "To my kids I'm just dad with the guitar," he says, smiling benignly.

Cannon is a perfectly formed paradox: the reluctant rock'n'roll frontman who can turn the most private corner of his family life into a universal anthem. Where a younger songwriter might have leaned into escapism, Cannon digs into the reality of being present – husband, father, provider – and sets it to melody. It is a different kind of rock-star heroism, quieter but no less compelling. "I try not to overthink it," he says with a shrug. "It's just life, man. You put your head down and keep going."

When asked what draws him outdoors – to the lake, to hunting, to the quiet – his tone softens. "It clears my head," he says. "It's peaceful. You can think straight out there. Everything slows down. I guess it's always been like that for me." He shrugs, as though the answer should be self-evident.

In an industry addicted to constant exposure, Whiskey Myers remain outliers. They still release their music on their own label, Wiggy Thump Records, with distribution through Nashville-based Thirty Tigers. They rarely indulge in promo, yet they can fill arenas. Cannon embodies that ethos. He is certainly no salesman. He doesn't gush about inspiration or ambition. He spits again into his jug, shrugs at the questions, and lets the songs do the talking.

> **"We're very democratic when it comes to the music and the art."**
>
> **Cody Cannon**

Whiskey Myers' ascent has been achieved almost entirely outside the usual machinery of the music business. One of the biggest boosts came not from radio or glossy profiles, but from television. Their songs have featured heavily in *Yellowstone*, the Kevin Costner ranch saga, which helped catapult them to a far wider audience. Other syncs have followed, feeding the sense that their music belongs as much to the wide open spaces of America as to the stage. "We don't chase that stuff," Cannon says. "If it comes along and people like the music, that's fine. But we don't change what we do for it. We just keep playing." His point is clear: the band's connection to their fans is forged on the road, not on screen.

On the new album, that restless streak finds its voice in *Ramblin' Jones*, a quirky, loping, rock-rap rumble somewhat in the style of Cage The Elephant, that finds Cannon semi-freestyling a lyric centred on a Southern colloquialism. A 'jones' is a craving, an itch you can't shake. Cannon turns it into a confession. '*After all these years, you know I still got a ramblin' jones*,' he declares, a line that feels like a boast *and* a burden. For all his talk of home life and responsibility, the compulsion to keep moving, to keep playing, has never left him.

Even as we finish talking he's already half-distracted by the night ahead. "I've got chores to do, and then we're heading out to do a show in Arkansas," he says, with the weary pragmatism of someone for whom constant travel is part of the deal. It is not boastful, nor even particularly enthusiastic, just the life he's chosen and continues to live.

In 2025, Whiskey Myers stand as one of the USA's biggest independent rock acts, while sounding and carrying themselves like the same East Texas boys who used to haul amps into honky-tonks. Cody Cannon may be the reluctant spokesman, but his songs speak volumes: about work, family, resilience, temptation, survival, and about a band who, after 18 years together, still have one hell of a ramblin' jones. ●

Whomp Whack Thunder is out now via Wiggy Thump Records.

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SCHOOL'S OUT

British rockers **Massive Wagons** return to Lancaster for a hometown throwdown by playing a show for kids as well as advocating for anti-bullying and mental health campaigns.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Massive Wagons (l-r): Adam Thistlethwaite, Baz Mills, Adam 'Bowzer' Bouskill, Alex Thistlethwaite, Stephen Holl.

The kids are alright: Adam meets future rock stars.

It's 10am at The Great Hall, and about four hundred children are lining up outside with their schoolbags. They process in pairs, holding hands, ushered inside with military precision by teachers. Gasps of "*wow!*" are heard as they take in the auditorium's high ceilings, bright lights and enormous stage. Two girls are headbanging already. Another murmurs "I've never seen anything like it…"

At the door, Massive Wagons' manager (and frontman Baz Mills' partner) Terri Chapman waves kindly at the kids filing in, liaising with venue and school staff in between. Over the last year she's negotiated the considerable red tape involved with putting on a rock show for under-14s. Eight local primary schools have classes of children here today, the vast majority of them aged between eight and ten.

"Yeah, I think it's all under control," Chapman smiles, a little nervously as seats are filled in blocks of uniformed colour, kids bouncing in their seats, sitting quietly or playing clapping games. Some have ear defenders. Most of them don't.

"We approached the idea years ago," Mills tells us, down-to-earth but buzzing offstage. "We thought, wouldn't it be amazing? It would do something different, playing a show for some kids. But it was difficult to organise."

Their chosen location didn't make things easier, even if the motive was equally worthwhile. Nestled in the grey-paved campus of Lancaster University (somewhat isolated, outside the city centre) Lancaster Great Hall is chiefly used for exams and classical recitals these days. There's no in-house PA. The air feels sedate, all academia, noticeboards and thick foyer carpets. It hasn't rocked in a long time.

And yet at one point it was all very different. Between 1970 and 1985, under the stewardship of student-turned-promoter Barry Lucas, The Great Hall hosted gigs by virtually every rock'n'roll icon you can think of – helping boost the clout of live music in the north of England. Helpfully situated just off the M6, it became a convenient spot for bands en route between Manchester and Glasgow. AC/DC, The Who, Pink Floyd, Paul McCartney, Black Sabbath, U2, Dire Straits, Eric Clapton, Tina Turner, Queen, T. Rex, Blondie, Ramones and The Pretenders are among those who played here.

Eventually Lucas moved on and new management came in. The first few shows lost money, and the Student Union decided not to get involved in the "risky business" of booking rock bands anymore.

And so, for 40 years, the hall remained a distortion-free zone. Until today.

"All of our relations, our uncles, dads, granddads, they've banged on about this place for years," Mills muses. "It's all 'back in the day, I went to watch Slade at the uni', 'I went to watch AC/DC', 'I saw Queen up there'… So there's going to be a lot of reminiscing, I think, hopefully, for locals."

Formed up the road in Carnforth, Massive Wagons are a known quantity in these parts. They all still live locally. Their songs are littered with references to the region. Since 2022, Mills and guitarist Adam Thistlethwaite have toured local primary schools as part of an anti-bullying campaign, '*Forget The Haters*' (a suitably PG spin on their 2022 track *Fuck The Haters*). Both fathers to primary school-aged children themselves, with memories of being picked on in their own school days, the cause is close to their hearts.

"It impacts your life, doesn't it?" Mills says, simply. "You're only there for a small part of your life, but it has a massive impact. You remember who the bullies were, you remember who your friends were. It shapes who you're gonna be."

"I mean, my experience was only really a few months, but it genuinely changed me right into my twenties," observes Thistlethwaite – the taller, gentler counterpart to Mills' mohawked barrel of frontman eyes and nervous energy. "A lot of the time they don't even realize, because it's dressed up as banter. You might not realize you're affecting somebody else's life the way you do. And it *does* sound corny, but if we stop even one instance of that happening, it's totally worth it."

"It *does* sound corny, but if we stop even one instance [of bullying], it's totally worth it."

Adam Thistlethwaite

It's almost 10.30am. Backstage the mood is cheerful if a little anxious. It's the first time they've played such a big-scale hometown show – and the first time they've played to a room full of minors. You can see the question flashing across the faces of band and crew alike: will these kids actually *like* this? Can we expect small children in 2025 to enjoy loud, old-school rock'n'roll with Leppard, Quo and shots of punk in its veins? Or will it be totally lost on them?

The lights go down.

We hold our breath, but not for long. The cheer from the seats is loud, piercing and immediate, as the band stride on, waving at the excited faces screaming back at them. The five members of Massive Wagons look at each other. They can't believe it. We can't believe it. *Nobody* can believe it. It's a uniquely joyous moment.

"ARE YOU READY FOR SOME ROCK AND ROLL?" Mills roars, part punk rocker, part kids birthday entertainer in his Ramones vest, *Sesame Street* socks, tattoos and whirling locks. It's hard to picture a frontman better suited to this.

As the band dive into what's essentially a proper rock show – albeit a shorter one, and *slightly* quieter but not much – the clapping, waving and cheering continues. There's something simple ▷

SIMON DUNKERLY/PRESS x2

Following the matinee show for the kids, the band performed again the same evening.

and profoundly touching about it. Yes there are a few blank faces but a lot more look enthralled, some are laughing. One teacher administers a plaster to a small hand as he bobs along to a first-class *Missing On TV*.

"This has gotta be better than geography hasn't it?!" Mills calls out. The response suggests that the kids agree. *In It Together* is both a rousing call for community and a love letter to the lifers of rock'n'roll. *'Just remember folks, you're great the way you are'*, they sing in *Free And Easy* – the sort of lightness and quietly deep good sense we could all use more of. The room sings, united, carefree.

It's kind of amazing; that expression of communal release, coming from a generation who (for the most part) aren't exposed to live music, or live arts in general. A generation whose childhood was shaped by lockdowns. A generation fed with an endless choice of streamed entertainment. Another teacher standing next to me points at one little girl, dancing with unbridled glee. "She's normally *so* quiet in class!" the teacher beams, incredulous.

"I'm letting them know as quick as I can that it's all right to scream, y'know, 'stamp your feet, clap your hands, wave your arms!'" Mills reasons later. "I wouldn't ordinarily do that as much, but I just wanted to really get through to them."

It's like watching Rock Gig 101 in 30 full-bodied minutes: the chorus singalongs, the arm swaying, the call and response sections, the volume contests between one half of the crowd and the other. By the time the confetti cannons blast, even the shyest children are bounding out of their seats.

"It's funny because they love that," Mills says, "but when you play to a grown up crowd, they love it as well! Like 'who can make the most noise?' '*wayyyy!*' They just love that basic stuff. There's nothing disconnecting these kids and adults. It's the same basic fun elements."

By 6.30pm, the line of Massive Wagons T-shirts stretches out into the rain, around the block. A Wagons-themed bar serves drinks. Terri oversees the front desk with wristbands and guestlists; today feels as much her baby as anyone's.

Backstage, guitarist Stephen Holl and their sound guy Dave compare notes on gigs by local heroes The Lancashire Hotpots. It's a family affair, steeped in North West lore and camaraderie. Earlier we watched them conduct the most laidback VIP package we've ever seen; not so much a 'Meet N' Greet' as an hour of chatty, informal mingling, the band greeting fans like old friends.

Pop rock singer-songwriter Harrison Rimmer gets the evening off to a cheerfully caffeinated start, but it's Macclesfield's prodigal sons The Virginmarys who set the bar high. Like, *really* high. One of the country's most exciting live bands – melody-forward rockers with the raw fire of a hardcore punk group – they have a dark side that offsets the bouncing 'dad energy' of the Wagons guys.

> **"I'm letting them know that it's all right to scream, 'stamp your feet, clap your hands, wave your arms!'"**
>
> **Baz Mills**

And yet at heart, they are not all that different. There's a realness that both bands share. Commitment to their fans. Ganglike closeness onstage and off. Loyalty to their hometowns, their roots, all the while shooting for the stars and refusing to compromise artistically.

Kicking tonight's headline set off on a high, the bright yet biting *Back To The Stack* elicits shout-alongs to rival those of a football crowd after a particularly satisfying victory. The room buzzes. Stories from Great Hall guests past have flown about all day. The guy who operated a follow-spot on Phil Lynott when Thin Lizzy played here. The group of mates who ran into Debbie Harry, the night Blondie headlined. The couple who watched Bon Scott carry Angus Young on his shoulders in 1977. All of Wagons' friends and relatives' nights out watching legends at this uni campus off the M6. Playing here means something.

It's all there in the delight on Baz Mills' face. Nailing this thing, headlining the first rock show here in 40 years – this guy who, in another life, drove a tipper lorry on this same site, helping to build science labs and other campus buildings.

"This is absolutely insane, Lancaster!" he roars as they leap into a triumphant *Tokyo*, all king-sized chorus and stirring classic rock chops with a 21st century voice. Local boys, playing like big shots.

Recording tonight (and tomorrow, when they'll fill the room again) for a live album, Massive Wagons play like a band stepping up a league. There are AC/DC-primed riffs, fizzling pop punk moments, huge ballads. Lyrics are funny, surprising, moving in places. *Generation Prime* is a takedown of instant-gratification culture. *Please Stay Calm* makes them all grow taller with its Def Leppard nods, searing guitars and incisive vulnerability.

Earlier, reps from male suicide prevention charity Andy's Man Club came on stage to announce a new centre in Morecambe. Their pitch was short and sweet, without an ounce of righteousness. It could easily have felt like lip service or contrived do-gooding, but it didn't. Now, a beautifully harmonised *Night Skies* makes an emotive, classy hat-tip to that work, raising compassion for an often silent illness.

"It's breaking the stigma of depression in blokes, you know, it's just…" Mills reasoned earlier, "making it *normal*. You hope that stigma will go and then the younger lads, they'll grow up in a society where there isn't one. But that'll take some time to come through."

"They set the tone completely right as well," Thistlethwaite added, of the sessions the charity hosts across the country. "It's not preachy. It's just a kind of quiet 'we're here if you need it'. There's no pressure. Just have a brew, do speak, don't speak. Just come in."

That's Massive Wagons all over. Principled but never preachy. Guys you might meet at the school gates. Rockers you'd go to the pub with, keenly aware of the everyday things that shape people. It's not hard to see their anti-bullying talks and Andy's Man Club affiliation going hand-in-hand.

In front of eight-to-ten-year-olds this morning, and a roomful of adults tonight, they drove home the same key messages: live music is a wonderful thing, and be good to each other. "I think it's genuinely important," Mills concludes. "It creates decent human beings."

They close with a hearty *Fee Fi Fo Fum*. The room erupts, united by this music, this place, this band. Suddenly our 'grown-up' crowd isn't all that different from the children earlier. ●

Baz: socks appeal.

SIMON DUNKERLEY/PRESS

TURKISH DELIGHT III
Khalil Turk & Friends

Escape Music is delighted to announce the release date for Khalil Turk & Friends Turkish Delight new studio album titled "Volume 3" with 500 limited edition double Vinyl "Side A+B Cool Blue colour and side C+D Bloody Mary colour". All individually numbered 1-500!

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SIDE A
SIDE D
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ESMV1034

Turkish Delights Volume Three celebrates the absolute joy that Escape Music co-owner Khalil Turk has for the kind of music he loves so much and has spent the last thirty and then some years championing. Indeed, his enthusiasm for a new band or a new song today is no different from when I first met him in the mid '80's.

Here we are, over thirty years since the first Escape Music album appeared hot off the presses and this collection of songs, personally chosen by Khalil, reiterates the enthusiasm he still possesses for the music he is utterly immersed by - Dave Reynolds

RELEASED NOVEMBER 7TH 2025

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James LaBrie (Dream Theater/Solo)
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Harry Hess (Harem Scarem)
Kent Hilli (Giant/Perfect Plan)
Dino Jelusick (Jelusick/TSO/Dirty Shirley/ George Lynch)
Ralf Sheepers (Primal Fear/Gamma Ray)
Jerome Mazza (Pinnacle Point/Kansas)
Craig Brooks (Touch)
Dan Reed (Dan Reed Network)
Mark Boals (Yngwie Malmsteen/Ted Nugent/Ring Of Fire)
Andrew Freeman (Great White/Last In Line)
Mick Devine (Seven/The Roads)
Mick Box (Uriah Heep)
Kee Marcello (Europe/Easy Action/Solo)
Marty Friedman (Cacophony/Solo)
Howard Leese (Heart/Bad Company)
Mike Slamer (Streets/Seventh Key/Steve Walsh/City Boy)
Doug Aldrich (Whitesnake/ The Dead Daisies/Hurricane/Dio)
Mitch Perry: (MSG/Edgar Winter)
Ivan Keller (Jelusick)
Jimmy Westerlund (One Desire)
Laurence Archer (Grand Slam/Thin Lizzy/Solo)
Fredrik Folkare (Unleashed/Eclipse)
Robby Boebel RIP (Ray Of Light/Frontline/Phantom 5)
Vinny Appice (Last In Line/Black Sabbath/Dio)
Ian Paice (Deep Purple)
Josh Devine (One Direction/Levara/Sign Of The Wolf)
Johan Kullberg (Hammerfall)
Chuck Wright (House of Lords/Giuffria)
Steve Mann (MSG/Lionheart)
Chris Childs (Thunder/Lonerider/Tyketto)
Nick Foley (Atack)
Jeff Pilson (Foreigner/Black Swan/Lynch Mob/Dokken)
Billy Sheehan (Mr Big/The Flood/ Winery Dogs)
Adam Wakeman (Black Sabbath/Ozzy Osbourne)
David Ragsdale (Kansas)
Wayne Banks (Saxon/Brazen Abbot/Robin Gibb)
Takeaki Itoh (Pinnacle Point)
Robert Sall (Work of Art/W.E.T/Overland)
Mark Mangold (Keys/Touch/Drive She Said)
Matteo Filippini (Moonstone Project)
Barend Courbois (MSG/Michael Schenker Group)
Bodo Schopf (MSG/Michael Schenker Group)
Rocky Newton (Lionheart/Grand Slam)
Gregg Fox (Renaissance Rock Orchestra)
Michael T.Ross (Hardline/Missing Persons/XYZ/Lita Ford)
Kjell Haraldsson (Glenn Hughes)
Alessandro Mori (Entirety/Total Death)
Nik Mazzucconi (Edge Of Forever)

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FREE SPIRITS

Despite playing around the countryside for decades, **Solstice** are the best-kept secret in British prog. This year they celebrate their 45th anniversary with a new album. Welcome to the *Clann*!

Words: **Dave Everley**

Solstice guitarist Andy Glass never expected to be playing for Queen Elizabeth II. His band emerged as the spliff-wielding hippie wing of the early 80s British prog revival, and had followed a fairly wayward path ever since.

Yet there they were, in 2007, performing in front of the reigning monarch on a makeshift stage at the opening of Milton Keynes football team MK Dons' brand new stadium, while jazz singer Cleo Laine waited to follow them.

"We're essentially a Milton Keynes band and they wanted some local representation," says Glass, whose Hawkwind-roadie ponytail and chilled stoner's drawl match his band's laidback but exploratory music. "God knows why they picked us though. But we were invited, and I thought, 'Yep, definitely.'"

They only played one song, the title track of their early 90s album *New Life*. But Glass swears he saw HRH digging it. "We're going at it, and she was, like 'Whooh! I love this prog rock!'"

He's kidding. Solstice are unlikely candidates for any kind of royal approval. Rarely has a band been so disinterested in playing the game. Where their one-time peers Marillion became unlikely mid-80s pop stars before settling into their current late-career purple patch, Solstice's own stop/start 45-year career has been defined by an absence of burning ambition and suspicion of the mainstream music industry.

"I don't regret having that attitude one bit," says Glass cheerfully. "We went and sat in front of a couple of big record company desks with a bloke smoking a cigar behind them. We always left thinking, 'Fuck that, just no.'"

> **"If we'd followed the major label path we'd have been f**ked."**
>
> **Andy Glass**

Solstice always were out of step with everything around them. They formed at the very end of the 70s as an instrumental four-piece after the teenage Glass, who had relocated from his native Wales to Aylesbury, was kicked out of his first band for being a pothead. There were no such issues with Solstice. Their debut gig was put on by a local drug dealer in Berkhamsted. Later shows were no less herbal. "We'd pass around joints between the band and the audience," says Glass.

Solstice were the missing link between the guitarist's beloved Yes and Hawkwind – the guitarist lived on a travellers' site at one point, and their first tour found them travelling in his double decker caravan pulled by a Bedford horsebox. A resurgent grassroots prog movement saw them lumped in with the likes of Marillion, Pallas, IQ and Twelfth Night.

"We were kind of bitchy about Marillion, and a whole raft of other bands who appeared around that time," says Glass. "They were our mates, but as far as we were concerned they were doing early Genesis, except not that well. Mind you, we had a singer who sounded like Jon Anderson."

He's talking about Sandy Leigh, who sang on Solstice's 1984 debut album, *The Silent Dance*, and whose helium-high voice sailed close enough to Yes' diminutive front-pixie to give copyright lawyers the night sweats. Leigh was the third of eight vocalists who have fronted Solstice down the years, all of them women.

"I'm a huge fan of Joni Mitchell, and of the female voice generally," says Glass of this distinction between his band and their male-fronted contemporaries. "I've never considered not having a female singer in the band."

It seemed like things were going well for Solstice. They won over prog-heads and Hells Angels alike, played Stonehenge, and even appeared on the cover of *Melody Maker*. But they were late out of the gate with their debut album – what should have taken two weeks took nine long months due to clashes with their producer. By the time it came out in 1984, the world was moving on from the neo-prog scene.

"We'd changed line-ups and audiences were going, 'It's not the same any more,'" says Glass. "So pretty much the last thing we did was Glastonbury in 1985. We knew it was finished."

Solstice went into hibernation for the rest of the decade. They finally re-emerged with a second album, *New Life*, in 1992 and a third, *Circles*, four years later. But prog's stock had never been lower. "No one was interested," says Glass.

Things were even worse for the guitarist on a personal level. By his own admission, the 1990s were "a complete fucking trainwreck". He was in an unhealthy relationship and found an escape in drugs – not just weed but harder stuff.

"What made me feel better was getting out of my head," he says. "It started with coke and then led into other things. The drugs got bad really quickly, and then you end up with a habit you've got to fund every day. Life was a fuck up."

He pulled himself out of the darkness after meeting fiddle player Jenny Newman. She needed a guitarist for her ceilidh band, and a professional relationship gradually turned into a romantic one. "That was a huge turning point," he says. "I'd hit bottom, and for whatever reason she was there for me."

Today, the pair are married, and Newman plays alongside him in Solstice. Glass had reactivated the band in 2006, but their career remained stop-start over the next decade-and-a-half. "Raising kids, putting food on the table," he says. "Real life."

2010's *Spirit* ("OK") was followed by 2013's *Prophecy* ("Better"). "But the chemistry wasn't working," says Glass. "We weren't doing fuck all."

That changed with 2020's *Sia* and the recruitment of Jess Holland, the latest in a long line of female Solstice singers. "She had no interest in progressive rock, but she got what we were doing," says Glass. "She's extraordinary. Those of us in the band who are knocking on a bit, we're like energy vampires now – we feed off her."

Holland's galvanising qualities have led to two more albums, 2022's *Light Up* and this year's *Clann*. They've filled the gaps between studio records with live albums and DVDs, and *The Silent Dance* is being reissued on vinyl. Maybe if they'd have had this kind of ambition all those years ago, they could have had Marillion's career.

"No chance," says Glass. "I wouldn't change anything about those early days. If we'd followed the major label path we'd have been fucked. We're high-functioning now, as opposed to dysfunctioning."

Clann and the reissue of The Silent Dance are both out now.

The HOT LiST

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

TED LINDÉN/PRESS

We've got some proper humdingers for you this month, from the newest faces in classic revivalism (e.g. The Lancasters, Luna Marble) to the youngest guitarist on Alice Cooper's latest record (Gyasi) and a rocked up version of a Pointer Sisters classic that's become a stealth favourite around these parts (step forward, Royal Republic). All that and much more good stuff besides.

Plus, with Christmas fast approaching, why not arm yourself now with a reassuring stash of quality rock'n'roll to offset the endless replays of *Merry Xmas Everybody*, *Fairytale Of New York* and fucking *Stay Another Day* that we're doubtless destined to be hit with over the coming weeks? There's a time and place for overplayed festive hits, of course, but it doesn't hurt to be prepared for the onslaught either. For more of the best new music each week head over to **classicrockmagazine.com**

Royal Republic *I'm So Excited*

Sweden's premier disco-rocking renegades return joyously to our lives, newly reimagined as The Blastbeaters – aka the band's "corpse-painted, Volvo-driving, bad-decision-making Black Metal alter-egos on a mission for world domination". Their schtick? Rocked up dancefloor classics with a black metal mask that no one knew they needed (but really, we do). So far they've taken on Shocking Blue's *Venus* and the Bee Gees' *Stayin' Alive* (falsetto-free and beefy as hell), but our favourite is their gleeful, sax-spiked rendition of The Pointer Sisters' *I'm So Excited*. Starry-eyed and immaculately executed, it instantly made our week a lot better. They're coming over to the UK for shows in February. See you under the glitter ball…
royalrepublic.net

Luna Marble

Crazy Lovin'

With a breath of outlaw mystique that breaks into a slow, percussive beat straight out of Fleetwood Mac's *The Chain* – plus a video full of lovely horses, which we enjoyed – the young Manchester troupe's brooding five-minute (and pretty much fat-free) rocker swirls heady blues and psychedelic 70s rock tastes into a commanding package. Fans of Rival Sons, Greta Van Fleet and Creeping Jean would do well to give them a spin. Nice.

lunamarbleband.com

Demob Happy *Who Should I Say Is Calling?*

Brighton-based alt./psych rocking trio Demob Happy are back, two years on from their last release and raring to go with this louche yet snappy lil' rocker – all Lennon n' McCartney atmosphere with stabbing sides of garage-sizzled riffing. "It's a conversation between me and myself," frontman Mark Marcantonio says, "all the parts I sought to destroy – the roguish energy I thought was doing me no good. But it argued back, saying you need a bit of that to write rock and roll – so it's an ode to both." Stay tuned for more.

demob-happy.com

Bones Owens *Come Down To It*

The Nashville lone ranger flies high and rocks hard on new album, *Best Western*, a commanding feast of raw, rollicking, bluesy and psychedelic southern flavours. The good times, the fighting times, the heartache, the sweetly mellow moments – it's all there, but right now our favourite is *Come Down To It*, a righteous rocker that soars like an eagle over Tennessee and parties like the Stones jamming with Tyler Bryant and Whiskey Myers. Also try *Before I'm In The Grave*, *Radiator Soup*… hell, it's all good to be honest.

bonesowens.com

LUNA MARBLE: LIAM MAXWELL/PRESS; DEMOB HAPPY: RICCARDO RASPA/PRESS; BONES OWENS: SOPHIA MATINAZAD/PRESS

The Southern River Band

All Over Town

These DIY Aussies have been on something of a winning streak over the last year or two, delighting UK fans on highly successful return trips to this side of the globe. So we're happy to report that their latest single is a total ripper – feelgood, boot-stomping rock'n'roll of the highest order, as full of life and verve as it is classic. Straight-ahead without being predictable or heavy-handed, it skips, bounds and shimmies across the dancefloor of your soul, like that really hot *and* smart person you thought was way out of your league… but actually, maybe they aren't? Find more on their new album, *Easier Said Than Done*, which is out now.

thesouthernriverband.com

Gyasi

Apple Tree

Fresh from a recent stint in Alice Cooper's band (filling the shoes of the late Glen Buxton on AC's reunion record *The Revenge Of Alice Cooper* earlier this year) the West Virginia-born, Nashville-based maverick instrumentalist makes like Jack White via David Bowie and the cream of seventies British glam, with a smattering of Lennon/McCartney sugar – writing on keys, as opposed to his usual guitar (though both feature beautifully here) for a prettily dreamy yet super-hooky effect.

"I had the title *Apple Tree* written down for a while and it just felt like musically this would fit so I used that title as a jumping off point for a bit of a nostalgic love song," he says. "Sometimes you have to let go of expectations and just venture into the musical void and then see what happens."

gyasimusic.com

GYASI: MICHAEL WEINTROB/PRESS

Bywater Call

Hold Me Down

Flying high on the big, bright soul pipes of Megan Parnell, sinking into a sublimely written chorus (its initial major-key sunshine offset by a gorgeous minor shift), the Canadian roots ’n’ soul rockers struck gold with this one.

“When I first came up with the idea for *Hold Me Down*, I really wanted to mesh Bywater Call’s aesthetic with more of a sixties soul sound,” says the band’s guitarist Dave Barnes. “Then Meg came up with that first note, and the song took on a life of its own. It’s one of those rare tunes for us that came together surprisingly easily.”

bywatercall.com

The Lancasters *Rules Of The Road*

Not actually from Lancaster (they’re four Italian blokes), these guys make sixties/early seventies-hewn sounds, psychedelic but full of grit and groove alongside ample dreamy freak-out textures on *Rules Of The Road*. Hippies with teeth, essentially. Flower power children with their boots planted firmly in a garage somewhere with Led Zeppelin, The Kinks and early The Who for company. Like the sound of that? Fancy hearing some more? There’s a brand new album, *The Word Of The Mistral*, out now.

thelancastersband.bandcamp.com

And keep an ear out for...

Black Stone Cherry

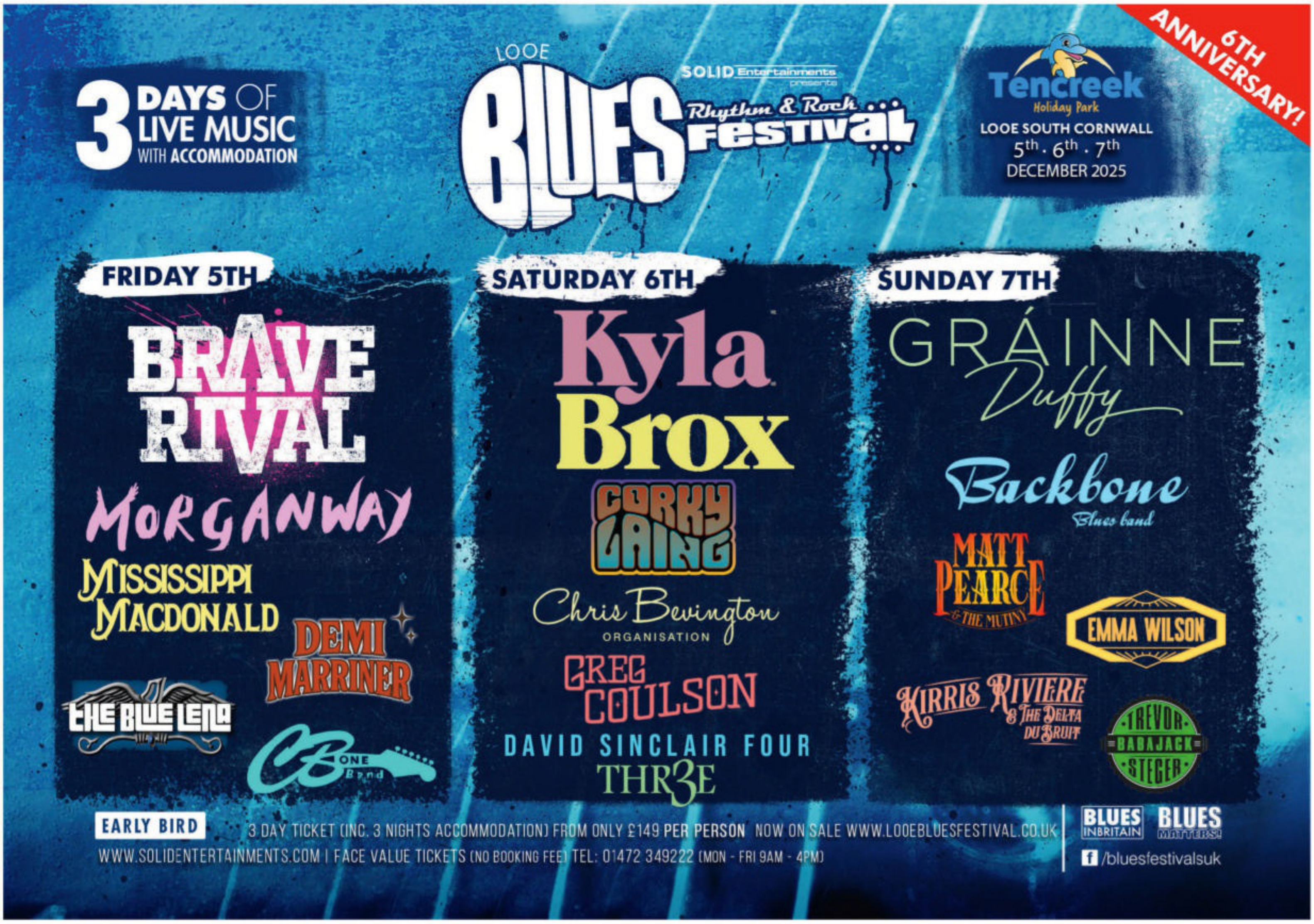
The Kentucky foursome will return in March 2026 with a new EP *Celebrate* – the first of two, much of which emerged from the same sessions earlier this year at guitarist Ben Wells’ home studio. *Neon Eyes*, the first single from this latest batch of work, is a thumping, grungy hard rocker that started life as a soundcheck riff. Eventually it blossomed into the slick yet gritty, Audioslave-infused beast it is now, paving the way for more similarly beastly yet brooding material to come.

“Any piece of art is a snapshot of that artist’s life,” singer/guitarist Chris Robertson reasons. “So I look at these songs as a culmination of everything we’ve lived since [2023’s] *Screamin’ At The Sky*.”

Drawing from a mix of everyday band life and some dark personal times, *Celebrate* promises to make existing Black Stone fans very happy, and probably hook in a few new ones – not least of all with a surprising but oddly inspired cover of Simple Minds’ *Don’t You (Forget About Me)* (yes, *The Breakfast Club* song, which, according to drummer John-Fred, Chris has wanted to cover “since he was about twelve”). There are party tracks and introspective moments. That sonic mood palate they do so well.

blackstonecherry.com

BYWATER CALL: JUAN PEREZ-FAJARDO/PRESS; THE LANCASTERS: IACOPO BARATTIERI/PRESS; BLACK STONE CHERRY: JIMMY FONTAINE/PRESS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Edited By Ian Fortnam

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THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

MARK SELIGER/PRESS

Bon Jovi

Forever (Legendary Edition) ISLAND

Jon Bon Jovi gets by with a little help from his friends on this revised version of their latest.

A few years ago, it looked like it was all over for Bon Jovi. As documented in *Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story*, the ever bouffant-laden Jon Bon Jovi couldn't hit the high notes any more. Heading into his sixties, his voice was shot, and vocal cord surgery was the last chance saloon.

Clearly, he came through it, and the band released *Forever* in 2024. But taking the show on the road, singing night after night, hasn't been an option. So how to keep the campaign alive? In the smashiest, niciest way possible – by getting some great showbiz mates in to help. *Forever (Legacy Edition)* takes the original album and turns it into a series of duets with everyone from cat food salesman Robbie Williams to fellow classic rocker Joe Elliot, a difficult hurdle turned into a warm, all-in-it-together hug. The source material may be way past prime Bon Jovi – there are plenty of well-crafted but less-than-memorable pop rock anthems, but nothing to hold a candle to the majestic *Living On A Prayers* of this world – but that's almost irrelevant. You sense this album exists more for JBJ himself, without having much to prove to the world at large. Those epic key changes are a thing of the past, but there's a lot to be said for giving in to ageing and making the best of it.

Living In Paradise – written with Ed Sheeran and given extra fizz here thanks to an ever-peppy Avril Lavigne – has those "just won *Masterchef*" air-punch vibes, a euphoric big hitter with the most energy on the album. There's nostalgic power-pop in new song *Red, White And Jersey*, steeped in the smalltown romance that is their calling card. Williams brings a Vegas strut to *We Made It Look Easy*, although the Spanish language version with Carin León that closes the record is much more fun.

At the other end of the scale, we endure *Kiss The Bride* with Billy Falcon. Written for Bon Jovi's daughter for her wedding day, to American ears it's likely a beautiful outpouring of a father's love; to cynical British ears, it's so unbearably saccharine it should come with an emergency puke bucket attached as standard. Thankfully, Bruce Springsteen turns up for *Hollow Man* to take the edge off proceedings with something a little more authentic. Listening to these two New Jersey legends embark on a gentle reflection on life is genuinely quite moving.

The starry line-up doesn't elevate *Forever* to classic Bon Jovi territory, but it does illuminate amply the affection the band are still afforded after all these years.

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Emma Johnston

Beth Blade & The Beautiful Disasters

Vintage Rebel x Trauma Bond INDEPENDENT

Sharp Blade's fourth.

Hailing from Cardiff, Blade and assorted Beautiful Disasters have released four crowdfunded albums since 2017, supported by relentless gigging and even the Kiss Kruise. She's also supplied backing vocals on two Thunder albums.

Following 2022's *Mythos, Confessions, Tragedies & Love*, this is their most ambitious work yet. Side one's *Vintage Rebel* is her take on rock's grand history, *Never Let Go* a buoyant opener laying down the band's trademark 80s-evoking US templates. *Down The Front* celebrates moshpits, *A Rock 'n' Roll Romance*'s duet with Gorilla Riot's Arjun Bhishna addresses dangerous drugs, *You Only Love Me When You're Drunk* reflects her highly personal lyrical approach.

Side two's intensely personal *Trauma Bond* section sees Blade reaching deep into her soul to dark places, including domestic abuse on *Damage, Dysmorphia* and heart-ripping acoustic ballad *You Never Screamed*.

The churning maelstrom forged by guitarist Dan Rowe, bassist 'Dirty' Berty Burton, drummer Sam Brain and Blade's rhythm guitar is dense, widescreen and startlingly monolithic, and her astonishingly powerful voice rings through one of the year's towering rock onslaughts.

On this showing, they could be huge.

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Kris Needs

Rick Wakeman

Melancholia MADFISH

Wistful, understated work.

He's the session player-turned-prog superstar, public speaker par excellence and all-round celebrity. Which is why what Wakeman does best - compose and play - is often overlooked.

This latest collection of Wakeman solo at his Steinway is an elegiac wonder, beautiful and profound and streaked through with sadness. The notes are a lingering reminder of things past, friends lost, the simple passage of time and growing older. It began with the haunting *Garo*, a piece his wife heard him playing at home and encouraged him to keep working on. And thank goodness she did. This evocative collection and the titles *Alone, Missing, Dance Of The Ghosts* tell you all you need to know about the album's tone: wonderful accompaniment on the road to our journey's end.

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Philip Wilding

Warrant

The Speed Of Metal MASSACRE

Heads down, horns up.

In the 80s, instances of two bands using the same name were invariably down to unwitting coincidences on different continents rather than rival factions of the same group. Just ask the London Quireboys, or Wrathchild America. Conveniently, when Hollywood hair dudes Warrant released their 1989 debut, the German speed metallers who'd bagged the moniker before them had been defunct for four years.

In their absence, the EP and LP they'd issued on Noise Records gained cult cachet, prompting a 1999 reunion. *The Speed Of Metal*, finds vocalist/bassist Jörg Juraschek leading a new line-up that reinvigorates their original template of melody and walloping velocity, with bone-crushing heaviness and bloodthirsty energy. If *Restless* and *Wild*-era Accept floats your boat, then the winning combination of Juraschek's commanding vocal hooks with the head-severing riffs and pummelling drums (*Cut Into Pieces, Regain the Fire*) will have your horns up in no time.

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Rich Davenport

Sammy Hagar

The Residency BIG MACHINE

All the hits and more, live.

Recorded at a nine-night residency over three weeks at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas this spring, *The Residency* opens with *Encore, Thank You, Goodnight* and Van Halen's *Top Of The World*. It then rattles through another 16 tracks in a set that's pretty much 50/50 Hagar/Van Halen, plus Montrose's *Rock Candy*.

Hagar's Best Of All Worlds Band is off-the-scale good - Joe Satriani, Michael Anthony and

Kenny Aronoff. Satch in particular is glorious, recreating Eddie Van Halen tones and torrents to stunning effect. We also hear *Right Now*, Hagar's first performance of Van Halen's *Love Walks In* since 1993, plus a decent stab at *Ain't Talkin' Bout Love* with Michael Anthony handling lead vocals.

For Hagar himself, though, vocal cracks are starting to appear. With Anthony on BVs, the 77-year-old gets a *lot* of help, but in places over-stretches himself. Not disastrously, but noticeably. Time tells.

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Neil Jeffries

Black Lips

Season Of The Peach *FIRE*

Garage rock twists the 60s until the head comes off.

'Open your eyes,' Cole Alexander sings, *'it's another day in hell!'*

If the 60s ever crawled out of the grave hungry for young flesh, it might sound like this eleventh album from Atlanta garage rockers Black Lips. Manson's Family gone a touch more Elephant 6, their lo-fi crank country, dark garage psych, girl-group soul and wonky Merseybeat pop resembles, at various points, degraded Beefheartian versions of the Stones, the Velvet Underground, Dylan, The Supremes and early Kinks. *So Far Gone* sounds like the basement of Villa Nellcote has become a dump for radioactive waste; *Tippy Tongue* is Spector's wall of sound being graffitied by drunks; *Hatman* is a 1950s shake shack slow-dance at which the sundae machine has been spiked with a near-fatal amount of ketamine. Yet a rousing and infectious sense of dynamics and melody survives the corrosion, and something of a ruined classic lunges forth.

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Mark Beaumont

Gypsy's Kiss

Piece By Piece *TOPILLO RECORDS*

Maiden-predating Londoners' reanimation continues.

Since the short-lived act that a teenage Steve Harris co-founded in 1974 re-formed for a show at 2018's Burr Fest, the Maiden bassist's old bandmate David Smith has resurrected them, and this third album continues to justify that decision.

Highlights include *One Way Street*, where twin guitars and a winning riff draw us in before Jonathan Morley lets rip with a zestful guitar solo, and the six-minute ballad *Soldier's Tale*, bookended with machine-guns and military drumming, either side of delicate piano deepening the melancholy mood. The synth-laced, southern rock-informed strut of *Never Say Never Again* is another standout. And while not all the 12 tracks prove as memorable, Gypsy's Kiss's second act shows no sign of outstaying its welcome.

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Johnny Sharp

Cathedral

Society's Pact With Satan

RISE ABOVE

British doom legends dig up a curious colossus.

Recorded at the arse end of sessions for their final album, *The Last Spire*, but buried in the archives until now, *Society's Pact With Satan* is one of Cathedral's most out-there creations. Recently unearthed by producer Jaime Gomez Arellano, its 30 minute duration plays host to some of the band's most eccentric ideas. It is also mercilessly heavy and dripping with macabre intent.

Cathedral always had a weird, wilful streak, and by the time they reached the end of their collective tether, they had almost entirely rejected the notion of pleasing anyone but themselves. This ignoble epic slithers through a coruscating, slow-motion start, marches purposefully through a duel between ghostly organ and Lee Dorrian's dead-eyed polemic, and then floors the accelerator for a magical, prog-friendly mystery tour built on Gaz Jenningss seemingly endless supply of monumental riffs. The obvious conclusion to draw is that, even in death, Cathedral are an unstoppable force.

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Dom Lawson

Dust

Sky Is Falling *KANINE*

Australia's alright if you like saxophones.

I was skeptical of this whole enterprise, given their insistence on featuring a saxophone on every goddamn track. If it's not Mike Monroe in the middle of a Hanoi Rocks song, I am not interested in pointless skronking. But saxman Adam Ridgway adds a breezy, melancholic layer to Dust's jagged post-punk, elevating their forceful fuzz into a kind of narcotic haze, the sorta thing you might hear while slipping into a cough medicine-induced coma. While Dust may sound two notes away from descending into a free jazz freak-out, for the most part the Aussies stick to the plot on this debut full-length, delivering icy, brittle goth-night creepers like *Swamped, Aside,* and *Fairy*, all of which sound so casually bleak that I had to lock the window so I wouldn't jump out of it. They close with the sublime ballad *In Reverie*, which sounds like David Sylvain fronting the Sisters Of Mercy. Haunting and cinematic.

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Sleazegrinder

Testament

Para Bellum *NUCLEAR BLAST*

Bay area thrashers' fourteenth.

Being thrash metal's perpetual bridesmaids hasn't thrown Testament off course. They may not have the profile of their Big Four contemporaries, but they've rarely mis-stepped during their 40-odd-year career.

Para Bellum roughly translates as 'prepare for war' – as much a comment on their own mind-set as the world in which it lands. Hulking singer Chuck Billy brings a guttural power to the propulsive *For The Love Of Pain* and *Witch Hunt*'s death metal-adjacent blitzkrieg, and the more straightforwardly thrashing *Havana Syndrome* is a callback to the late-80s glory days. Best of the lot is the emotional seven-minute string-assisted ballad *Meant To Be* – a path they've walked before, but never so effectively.

Testament could have traded on the undying nostalgia for thrash. Credit to them for determinedly moving forward.

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Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Spin The Skull: out of bottles.

PRESS

Spin The Skull

Spin The Skull

MORBID AND MISERABLE

There's this tipping point in a lot of extreme metal bands where it goes from balls-to-the-wall noise and fury to just completely disgusting ear abuse. Like rolling around naked in a swamp covered in leeches disgusting. That's hard to do with rock'n'roll, but goddamnit if Spin The Skull don't achieve it. Their debut positively wallows in fuzz-crusted filth, a toxic barrel of doom metal, spiked-jacket punk, and thrashy, distorted black'n'roll. Listen loud enough and you'll start hallucinating Christopher Lee riding a skeleton motorcycle and Anton LaVey feasting on hunks of tiger meat. It heaves, it throbs, it bleeds all over the carpet. It will clear out any room except for the one you really wanna be in. It will fill you full of worms. It's the most excessive thing I've heard all year, which is saying something. It's so good. It's the best record of 2025. I know I've said that like 14 times this year, but this time I really mean it.

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Bad Interior

Bad Interior *SELF RELEASE*

Look, I'm all for looking forward to the next thing, but sometimes I miss the days back in the nineties when a band would make a racket that sounded like the MC5 tuning up and then just press it on a CD and go on tour with Sonic Youth or somebody. That's what this is. I mean, they do other stuff too, like creepy gothy shit here and there, but mostly this is just a heat-funnel of feedback. And I love it.

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Mad Dogs

Future is Now *GO DOWN*

It's been a while since we checked in on Italy in this column so I was pleased to stumble on this cyclone of Roman action rock. Clearly and unapologetically inspired by The Hellacopters, *Future Is Now* mixes rent-party garage punk with loud, pulverizing stadium rock. In a fair world, they'd actually make it to play a stadium, but whatever. Killers songs, killer hooks, a real cool time.

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Cop Killer

Cop Killer *DROP TO POP*

Denver's favourite 'hood threats bring back the kinda pissed-off, rock-throwing, window-shattering punk rock that prehistoric agitators like Black Flag and Circle Jerks used to start riots with. Rock'n'roll pushed straight to the edge. It all ends with a trashy, thrashy cover of the Body Count shit-stirrer they named themselves after. Probably already deported to a Venezuelan gulag.

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The Covids

Pay No Mind

WAP SHOO WAP

Amsterdamned punks fuelled on pogo-powder bashing out two-minute odes to getting fired and wasting space. There's an underlying post-punk darkness if you wanna dig that deep, but I'm pretty shallow so I'm in it for the pub-rock thumpin' and the kind of squiggly guitar solos you can play with your teeth if you're drunk enough.

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Cheap Trick

All Washed Up BMG

Illinois past masters relight the flame on swaggering 21st.

From the first riff, which hasn't come to make small talk, Cheap Trick are plainly here to do what they do best. Punkily raucous but never losing control, these septuagenarians are still tapped into the motherlode of rock, 48 years since their debut. They're still bright beasts who understand its essence: they know it, own it, like Parliament knew funk, like ABBA knew pop, like Hank knew country. Decades on from the moment in *Surrender* when they were startled to discover their mom and dad getting high to Kiss records, they're delivering their turbocharged power pop so purely that multiple generations will be able to roll on the couch to the ageless thrill of someone getting classic rock right. *All Washed Up*? They're a clean machine.

If they're less about straight lines than AC/DC, happy to allow the noise to spill outside its structures at times, they – and long-time producer Julian Raymond - are shrewd enough to know Route One still gets you there fastest. Home run single *Twelve Gates* flirts with The Beatles' *Rain* (its harmonies especially), before blowing the doors off. Robin Zander, who hits his marks throughout this humdinger, sings of a *'brand new start'* and *'a new taste coming'*. In truth, anyone looking for those things is in the wrong place. Nobody here wants to reinvent any wheels. They just want to assert that their electricity is evergreen, their chests are puffed out and their libido – one of many things Oasis lack – is extant. Like we said, it's rock.

Everything pounds excitedly, Rick Nielsen's guitars garrulous, until the inevitable slow one halfway through as a token nod to light and shade. That's left in the dust as the pace again picks up. Glimmers of Aerosmith, The Cars, The Knack and even The Sweet can be discerned, but the best comparison point is probably Big Star on beer.

Bands are often, tiresomely, described as being like another "on acid". That wouldn't work here. No-one's wigging out or wandering off or thinking deep thoughts during titles like *The Riff That Won't Quit* or *Bad Blood*. That would dilute the direct crunch of the punches. Cheap Trick just aim to fizz.

And so, still singing of wanting to touch you and be touched, of getting it on and whamming and booming and banging, Cheap Trick stay eternally youthful, loyal servants of a genre which is lucky to have their priceless magic.

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Chris Roberts

Jim Jones All Stars

Get Down ~ With It! ASSAI

Elemental live collection from untamed force of nature.

Part snake-handling tent show testifier, part *Raw Power*-ed one-man MC5, Jim Jones has always been worth the price of admission. Whether walking on the hands of the faithful at turn-of-the-nineties Thee Hypnotics shows, or soaking contemporary audiences in airless basement clubs with saline squalls of stage sweat that arc through the air like murder scene spatter patterns, Jim Jones invariably leaves nothing on the stage.

Get Down ~ With It! meanwhile (a neatly constructed compendium of choice '23-'25 live show snippets) attempts and almost succeeds in capturing JJ's inestimable lightning in a bottle, but there's no substitute for being there, for going eyeball-to-eyeball with the truly possessed, a one-of-a-kind performer for whom every single song's a breathless emotional climax and every single show an incomplete rock 'n' soul exorcism.

Specifically? *Get Down*'s an unrelenting 16-track collision/coalition of *Kick Out The Jams* sonic insurrection, Little Richard awopbop, James Brown work ethic, Jerry Lee Star Club intensity, the best sex and the baddest attitude. A career-wide set, a *Princess*, a *Frog*, a Jimmy Castor *Trogolodyte*, an Eddie Floyd *Big Bird*, a Hypnotics *Shakedown* and a whole lot of *Rock 'N' Roll Psychosis*. Are you ready to testify?

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Ian Fortnam

Doro

Warriors Of The Sea

RARE DIAMONDS

More classy classic metal from Germany's most regal.

The undisputed queen of European metal has been in a prolific and proactive mood over the last few years. Recent album *Conqueress – Forever Strong And Proud* was one of her strongest outings in decades, and this stopgap compilation of new and old odds and sods aims to keep that momentum going. The title track is the finest song here, and opens proceedings with plenty of ocean-bound drama and mid-paced bluster. A sturdy cover of AC/DC's *Touch Too Much* showcases Doro's flame-shrouded voice in the best possible way, and both *Tattooed Angels* and *Horns Up High* would be strong, metal-as-fuck additions to any set list. But it's the five live tracks that really bring home how much she is thriving these days: *Children Of The Dawn* and *Raise Your Fist In The Air* are monstrous anthems, walloped out by a band on blistering form. Everything rocks. Doro's benevolent reign continues.

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Dom Lawson

Heavy Pettin

Rock Generation

SILVER LINING MUSIC

Re-formed Glasgow rockers rekindle old flames.

Despite threatening to write a chunky entry in the history books of Scottish hard rock with their first two albums, 1983's *Lettin' Loose* and 1985 major label follow-up *Rock Ain't Dead* – replete with lion rampant flag flying on the cover – the mainstream breakthrough eluded Heavy Pettin. Like a fair few contemporaries, though, they've regrouped decades later, with the patronage of old-school hard rock label Silver Lining Music, who have put out Saxon and Diamond Head reissues in recent years. And despite the phrase 'Heavy Petting' seemingly forever being rooted in social mores of the seventies, theirs is the kind of sound that's gone in and out of fashion enough times to be immune to anachronism. So when songs like *Brother Sister* have sufficient rabble-rousing quality to light up an arena and are followed by the duetting vocals on a vintage soft-rock chorus on *Oblivion*, we're sold on this reunion.

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Johnny Sharp

Hawklords

Faith SHELLSHOCK

12th from space rock veterans.

Not to be confused with the 1978 Hawkwind spin-off of the same name, the space rock veterans digging deeper into their own orbit. This isn't nostalgia. It's propulsion.

Faith follows their recent *Time, Space, Relativity* album trilogy,

MCCLUSTER/PRESS

but turns the gaze inward: less galaxies, more metaphysical doubt. The cosmos remains present, but the real subject is human existence – belief, hesitation, the search for meaning. Spoken word pieces such as *Tethered* channel the spirit of Calvert's theatrical poetics, while *Drone* and *Dead Zone* deliver the familiar full-throttle guitar freakout.

Crucially, they're not a tribute act. *Transmissions (Industrial Techno)* splices Calvert-era DNA with pounding electronics, shooting sparks in unexpected directions. Elsewhere, riffs spiral, atmospheres sprawl and the void hums.

It doesn't reinvent the ship, but it doesn't need to. Hawklords are still reaching, still pulsing, still very much alive in the drift.

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Everett True

Various

Can't Get Enough: A Tribute To Bad Company PRIMARY WAVE MUSIC

Classic Bad Co songs played slightly differently.

Tribute albums are usually pointless. Fortunately, as a celebration of Bad Co's induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, this first ever official tribute to the band is definitely worth checking out.

The talent on offer is formidable and the interpretations – which never stray far from the originals – largely excellent. Among the best efforts come from country artiste HARDY, who opens with a stonking *Ready For Love*, and Charley Crockett, who sounds right at home on *Bad Company*. Meanwhile, Blackberry Smoke lock into *Run With The Pack* with terrific ease and The Struts do more than justice to *Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy*. Also worthy is *Seagull* from Joe Elliott and Phil Collen, helped along by Paul Rodgers and Simon Kirke. Quite why The Pretty Reckless close the album with *All Right Now* is a puzzle, but, you know, it's a classic and all that. Altogether inessential but enjoyable, nonetheless.

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Essi Berelian

Hollow Souls

Hollow Souls MEDIUM RARE MUSIC

Keepin' busy ain't no sin.

You can't keep a blues man down. In between albums for his main band – the Kris Barras Band – Barras put together Hollow Souls to keep the creative juices flowing and this debut six-track EP is a perfect calling card. There's not a duff track on this, and strategically deploying some guest appearances across four of the tunes keeps things spicy. Guitarist Jared James Nichols brings some complementary fretboard fire to opener *Borderline*, while The Cold Stares' Chris Tapp provides his unmistakeable vocal flair to *Bad Things*, Elles Bailey lights up *Burn It To The Ground*, and ex Monster Truck man Jon 'Marv' Harvey roars like a man possessed on *Shotgun*, all alongside resident singer Phoebe Jane. Quality hard-rocking blues.

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Essi Berelian

The Charlatans

We Are Love BMG

Indie rock faves bare souls on further sonic expansion

With one eye still on the cosmic vistas of their youth – note the very modern touches of pop ambience, vocal phase and synthetic space warp – The Charlatans of this 14th album have evolved into a far richer and more reflective band, as much concerned with inner as outer spaces. Life upheavals and fresh new starts seem to inform singer Tim Burgess's journey between the subtly industrial electronics of *Kingdom Of Ours*, through Smithsy folk rockers like *Many A Day A Heartache*, to the emotional psych blues rejuvenation that is *Deeper And Deeper*. The band similarly explore fresh avenues. Dashes of Parisian chic on *You Can't Push The River*. The Beach Boys-like harmonic construction of *For The Girls*. A plasticated jazz sax solo closing *Glad You Grabbed Me*, or the way *Out On Our Own* develops from a Velvets sizzle into a krautrock jig. Still out there, still searching.

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Mark Beaumont

Soulfly

Chama NUCLEAR BLAST

Extreme metal institution's hardest attack in decades.

Formed by singer/guitarist Max Cavalera following his 1996 exit from Sepultura, Soulfly haven't gone anywhere, yet it still feels as if they're mounting a comeback. 2018's *Ritual* was the quartet's best album in more than a decade, mixing their folk-influenced nu metal roots with all-out brutality and 2022's *Totem* maintained that balance while sounding mightily pissed off. With *Chama*, Soulfly have returned to form. Corralling such extreme music scenemates as Fear Factory guitarist Dino Cazares and Nails vocalist Todd Jones, it's their most ferocious blitzkrieg in 20 years, the likes of *No Pain = No Power* hitting like the Soulfly of yore except louder and angrier. *Storm The Gates* wields tribal percussion to bludgeoning effect, and *Ghenna* is a 115-second knockabout that sounds like the inside of a tornado. They never left, but welcome back.

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Matt Mills

The Trews

The Bloody Light KNOWN ACCOMPLICE/CADENCE MUSIC GROUP

Meaty radio rock from the heart of Nova Scotia.

Award-winning Canadian band The Trews have two decades of hard graft behind them, and their new album *The Bloody Light* speaks firmly to their Nova Scotia homeland, not least in the Celtic inflections of the title track.

Brawny, traditional working-men's rock, steeped in booze, sweat and diesel, with a deeply masculine sense of anguish and romance amid the Springsteen-esque radio rock. It's an album of grit and everyday struggle – there's little in the way of levity despite luminescence in the Beatles-style flourishes powering the country rock of *The Breakdown*, or the power-of-persuasion positivity of *Manifest*.

If you stopped off for a beer in a bar located deep in the Canadian wilds, this is exactly what you'd expect as the down-home soundtrack.

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Emma Johnston

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Stephen Dale Petit: still loving the blues.

BLACKHAM/PRESS

Stephen Dale Petit

Be The Love 333

Stephen Dale Petit has never been more entitled to sing the blues. *Be The Love* began, after all, with an eight-year relationship turned to ashes, before the shadow of an inoperable tumour raised the real possibility this sixth album could be his swansong.

On these seven songs, though, the Anglo-American guitarist plays his life in all its shades, nodding to his roots with the echo-chamber stabs of *Gift Horse* and *Low And Tight*'s bludgeoning rave-up, but elsewhere deploying such sonic invention and effervescent melody that blues dogma suddenly feels very far away.

The shimmering, stomping *Diamond* is a must-hear, Petit seemingly bidding farewell to his London haunts; likewise the rueful sweep of *A Better Man*, iced by the best Clapton guest solo in years. And while *Cherish A Ghost* finds Petit at his most lyrically wretched, the yearning hooks are instant and cathartic.

Towering above all is seven-minute finale *Sky Scraper*, alternately a country strum, garage rocker, showtune, *Seven Dwarfs* work-song, ELO-style orchestral epic and filthy funk grind. It's massively impressive – which goes for the whole album.

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Dion

The Rock 'N' Roll Philosopher KTBA

A companion piece to his autobiography of the same name, Dion DiMucci has called this collection "the ideal setlist, the songs I'd most like to play". You'd expect the big ones, like *Runaround Sue*, but almost uniquely amongst his peers, what resonates is how creatively potent he remains, with this year's *New York Minute* a doo-wop insta-classic.

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Marcus King Band

Darling Blue AMERICAN/REPUBLIC

Having played solo for the past five years, you might understandably anticipate that Marcus King's reunion with his erstwhile band wouldn't make much difference to his sound. Stylistically, perhaps not, but lean in to *Darling Blue* and you hear the camaraderie, with standouts like *Honky Tonk Hell* riding on a tight-but-loose push 'n' pull that speaks of a truly telepathic unit.

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Laura Cox

Trouble Coming EARMUSIC

More black leather than tailored suit, more sticky-floored subterranean sweatbox than al fresco bluesfest, this Anglo-French gunslinger opens her fourth album with a whistle of feedback and the spat-out Gallic shrug of *No Need To Try Harder*. Her lip stays curled through highlights like the title track and the superbly bratty *Do I Have Your Attention?*

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Miss Emily

The Medicine GYPSY SOUL

This medicine needs no spoonful of sugar: the Juno-nominated Canadian has such an easy, instantly likeable take on soul-blues that tracks like *My Freedom* slip down easily. Strong hooks are further sold by Miss Emily's honeyed foghorn of a vocal: an adaptable instrument that starts the party on *Running Again* and aches with ancient sorrow on *Smith's Bay Drowning*.

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Creeper

Sanguivore II: Mistress Of Death SPINEFARM

British goth rockers outdo themselves on fangtastic fourth album.

How do you follow the best album of your decade-long career? The one that pulled everything together in impressively fearless fashion. Everything in this instance being goth rock drama, horror-punk opera and Jim Steinman-esque epics about doomed vampire lovers.

For Creeper, the question is wholly rhetorical. You do it all over again, obviously. Halloween saw the arrival of *Sanguivore II* – when else? – but really, it would be a disservice to call it the *Reload* to *Sanguivore*'s *Load*. Mostly because it's even better. The hooks are heavier, the peaks are higher, and the pacing is picture perfect.

Once again the Southampton sextet worked with Tom Dalgety (Ghost, Rammstein, The Cult, Opeth), clearly a producer with a knack for capturing dark and theatrical rock. Creeper have said that this is a thematic sequel in which a vampire band rampages across America amid the Satanic panic of the eighties. Patricia Morrison's spoken intro on *A Shadow Stirs* tells it another way: *'Rock music is a horny vampire and tonight it is feasting upon you'.*

As ever, none of this half-baked lore and/or buffoonery works without a host of supreme songs to back it up, and boy, *Sanguivore II* has 'em. That leads us into *Mistress Of Death*, which rumbles along with metallic pomp before a bone-rattling, prime Megadeth breakdown, opening the gates for a series of epic guitar harmonies.

As a lead single, *Headstones* is a no-brainer – think Motörhead's *Burner* cosplaying as Creeper. A briskly brilliant three minutes of exploding guitars, double kick drums, rapturous gang vocals and, of course, handclaps. *'Surrender your soul to the sins of the devil's caress'* William von Ghould barks. Where do we sign up, mate?

Blood Magick (It's A Ritual), sounds like Belinda Carlisle post-unholy makeover. As glorious razor-edged guitars scythe through just about everything, Hannah Greenwood's soaring vocals – where the hook owes plenty to *Heaven Is A Place On Earth* – are the perfect counterpoint to Ghould's deliciously droll baritone.

Brooding and irresistible, *Prey For The Night* is quite possibly the best song Meat Loaf never wrote. *On Razor Wire*, decapitation has never sounded sexier, thanks to its smoky piano and raunchy saxophone bursts.

As the spellbinding *Pavor Nocturnus* closes, it's clear that Creeper have dropped the performance of their lives. *Sanguivore II* is one of those rare and precious rock records: instantly bewitching but oozing with moments to feast on time after time.

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Chris Lord

Wreckless Eric

England Screaming TAPETE

'The checkout girls all look like pigs…'

Re-recording albums is not unusual but Wreckless Eric's revisited record is not a megahit behemoth, but his most obscure album – 1985's *A Roomful Of Monkeys* by Captains Of Industry, a band featuring Eric and the occasional member of The Blockheads. The original – songs of, in Eric's words, "drugs, home-ownership, bankruptcy and bridal wear" – was splenetic and odd, sounded like nothing else in a climate of twee indie and MTV pop, and nobody bought it. Eric's new version brings a new lo-fi energy and the maturity of a dark Ray Davies: it sounds better than the original, the songs as relevant today as they once were, if not more so. A world of new builds and rugby clubs, bile and violence, an England that's still screaming, at itself and at everyone else: this is truly a great album.

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David Quantick

Steve Morse Band

Triangulation MUSIC THEORIES

Post-Purple purple patch.

Readers in the UK of a certain age will likely have heard Steve Morse's guitar working its mellifluous magic years before he replaced Ritchie Blackmore in Deep Purple. Notably on the Dixie Dregs' *Take It off The Top* – the theme tune to Tommy Vance's *Friday Rock Show.*

In addition to playing with Purple, Kansas, and enough side projects to fill a festival, Morse has carried the Dregs' genre-melding spirit of adventure into his long-running instrumental solo trio. *Triangulation*, Morse's first release since leaving Purple to care for his late wife, is quite the comeback. As ever, the riffs, guitar melodies. and even basslines (see snappy funk opener *Break Through*), are concise, upbeat, and memorable (*TexUS*). Morse's stirring lead work serves the songs tastefully (*Off The Cuff, The Unexpected*), while the title track featuring John Petrucci proves he can still melt the frets.

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Rich Davenport

Purpendicular

Banned NEW WEST

Poachers plus gamekeeper.

Ian Paice guested on one track from each of Deep Purple tribute act Purpendicular's first two albums. He now plays and tours with them. It's explained by his pre-existing friendship with the band's singer Robby Thomas Walsh – and longer periods of downtime while Paice's regular gig eases up on the roadwork.

This fourth album has echoes of DP in places, but drumming aside, the songs themselves are several leagues below. For example: last summer the band decamped to a village in the mountains above Porto to write – but soon needed rescuing when wildfires threatened. A similar incident witnessed by DP in Switzerland in 1972 inspired an enduring anthem. The four songs Purpendicular wrote about their own flame and smoke-based near-miss will have no such lasting impact. And the other five here aren't as good. Paice fans should approach with caution.

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Neil Jeffries

The Devil Wears Prada

Flowers SOLID STATE RECORDS

Metalcore split personalities co-exist on ninth album

Twenty years since forming in Dayton, Ohio, this hardcore-rooted quintet have fine-tuned the trick of expanding their sonic horizons without alienating a fanbase who will always, spiritually at least, be malcontented teenagers locking themselves in a bedroom convinced that no one understands them. The contrasts within their sound seem to co-exist on the recent short film they made for the blend of roaring, hardcore-splattered regret and synth-smothered widescreen yearning of *Where The Flowers Never Grow*, followed by the smartphone-torches-aloft power balladry of *Wave*. They're high points, but TDWP still make the blood pump fastest when getting heavy, and using thunderous screamo passages sparingly on the soul-searching *So Low, All Out* and *Ritual* adds to their potency. The mood swings affecting *Flowers* in general heighten the state of

HARRY STEEL/PRESS

angst-wracked unease that is TDWP's natural habitat – and the place where they remain a convincingly bi-polar force to be reckoned with.

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Johnny Sharp

Various

No Life 'Til Leather – A Tribute To Metallica's *Kill 'Em All* SILVER LINING MUSIC

Joyless recreation of one of metal's great debut albums.

The heavy metal tribute album industry has been ticking along for decades, invariably involving a parade of has-beens and never-weres serving up versions of songs or albums by far superior bands while attempting to waft away the stench of opportunism.

Metallica's game-changing 1983 debut album gets the track-by-track cover treatment here, with largely joyless results. The Almighty and Testament phone in inferior versions of *The Four Horsemen* and *Seek And Destroy*, while the otherwise mighty Saxon utterly shit the bed with a risible *Phantom Lord*. In the credit column, Swedish prog metallers Soen stamp their identity on *Motorbreath*. But the best here is Motörhead's imperious version of *Whiplash* – a track originally released on a different Metallica tribute album in 2004. Which sums up the pointlessness of this exercise.

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Dave Everley

Thee Headcoats

The Sherlock Holmes Rhythm 'N' Beat Vernacular DAMAGED GOODS

No. 20 from Billy Childish's enduring garage Stuckists.

Remember the early 00s? When the garage rock revival went overground with The White Stripes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Hives, Von Bondies, The Black Keys et al? Yes you do. Jack White appeared on *Top Of The Pops* with Billy Childish's name Sharpie'd down his forearm. A homage to the godfather of the scene who's been plying his trade in approximately 63 bands and 2,738 albums for previous decades with the kinda raw 'n' pared-down budget rock that makes Cock Sparrer sound like symphonic prog. There's nowhere to hide with that barest of production and that's why Thee Headcoats remain the greatest band in rock'n'roll's entire 60-year recording history. Yes they are.

Satirising the music industry itself as impressively as The Fall, *The Sherlock Holmes…* is classic Headcoats. An insta-signature tune in itself, Childish sneers rhyming couplets worthy of John Cooper Clarke throughout *If People Don't Like It (It Must Be Good)* like an irascible Iggy. *The Friends Of The Buffway Fanciers Association* sounds like a deliberate pisstake of *The Village Green Preservation Society* with Childish adopting a deliberately plummy approximation of Ray Davies while delivering an amusing precis of their economical R&B: *'One chord is good/A second is alright/Three is a crowd/Four will end in a fight.'*

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Alex Burrows

Thee Headcoatees

Man Trap DAMAGED GOODS

Billy Childish protégés are as thrilling and fun as ever.

There's a wonderful sense of comfort to be had knowing that, 26 years since their last album, *Here Comes Cessation*, Medway hellcats Thee Headcoatees' motor is still running in the garage. But comfort be damned for this is exactly how things should be – a collection of red-raw ramalama crawling and gasping from rock'n'roll's primordial swamp, wiping away the goo and bursting into life.

As ever, Thee Headcoatees' pot bubbles with choice covers that include The Ramones' *The KKK Took My Baby Away*, The Stones' *Paint It, Black* and Fang's scuzzy *The Money Will Roll Right On In*. Dead Moon's *Walking On My Grave* snarls with a speaker-serrating bite matched by the Childish-penned title track and the gloriously primitive *The Double Axe*.

Sure, there are no surprises here but then again, none are needed. For no-frills seat of your pants excitement, then you need look no further.

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Julian Marszalek

Duff McKagan

Lighthouse: Live In London EARMUSIC

What's really important in the omnishambolic 2020s.

McKagan's political commentary is rooted in everyday interactions with real people throughout his 40-year career, which brings authenticity to this live performance of his third solo album, *Lighthouse* (2023). The set also features tracks from *Tenderness* (2019) along with new single *Fallen Ones*, a ballad reminiscent of *Use Your Illusion*-era Roses. *Just Another Shakedown* and *I Saw God On Tenth Street* are cynical and revolutionary, but *Chip Away*, *Tenderness* and a cover of Bowie's *Heroes* suggest Duff's ultimate message: healing in the face of division. Is one gig going to change the world? No. But we need art more than ever, and *Lighthouse* is a timely reminder of why we bother when things seem like they're going to shit.

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Phoebe Flys

Danko Jones

Leo Rising REIGNING PHOENIX

Power pop with petrol in its veins and rock in its heart.

Over 12 albums and almost 30 years, Danko Jones have perfected feelgood rock'n'roll. Up there with Motörhead and AC/DC for sheer pig-headed consistency, the Canadians have maintained a steady flow of sunny, toe-tapping tunes that bypass any critical faculties to insist you have a good time regardless of what's going on outside.

Leo Rising is that, plain and simple. 11 infectious songs with big riffs and bigger choruses, there's something gloriously obnoxious about just how relentlessly upbeat Danko are. Their mission statement is writ plain on opener *What You Need*: *'If you want guitars to make you go deaf, we're gonna give you what you need'*. Everything else is just details, a diversion from the fact this is brilliant rock'n'roll, designed to put smiles on faces and buttocks on dancefloors.

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Rich Hobson

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Cassidy Paris: the wet leather look.

IAN RITTER/PRESS

Cassidy Paris

Bittersweet FRONTIERS

At just eleven years old, aspiring singer, songwriter and musician Cassidy Paris was taken under the nurturing wing of Paul Laine, singer of Danger Danger and The Defiants. More than a decade later, her early promise also recognised by Frontiers Records, Melbourne native Paris has toured the world several times, gathering a cult following along the way.

Though that impetus suffered a small but unexpected setback in May when two members of Cassidy's backing band quit mere days before a British and Irish tour, she channelled its negativity in an anthem of defiance entitled *Stronger* that as a bonus track now wraps this successor to 2023's well-received debut album *New Sensation*.

With material supplied by (or co-written with) Laine, Trixter's Steve Brown, Dragan Stanic from Melbourne's Roxus and her father Stevie Janevski of the band Wicked Smile, also cameos from ex-White Spirit keysman Gary Brandon and Harem Scarem guitarist Pete Lesperance on *Bittersweet* and the aforementioned *Stronger*, sees the eminently likable Paris – who doesn't turn 23 until next month – take new steps towards her lifetime goal of registering a presence on the international scene.

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Midnite City

Bite The Bullet PRIDE & JOY MUSIC

Established in 2017 by former Tigertailz singer Rob Wylde, Nottingham's Midnite City have carved a reputation as purveyors of AOR that is both deliciously smooth and simultaneously powerful in nature, with a strong hint of Def Leppard. Mixed to perfection by Crazy Lixx mainman Chris Laney, *Bite The Bullet* is as strong and satisfying as any of their previous four.

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The Hot One Two

Virtues TOWERROCK

This fine young band enjoyed positive reviews of their 2023 debut, *Superbia*, though goodwill was dented by the ejection of one of its most popular members. The new quartet still rocks hard and tunefully, with unswerving conviction. Reflecting THOT's swaggering, energy-packed live show, which comes very much recommended. *Virtues* is fresh and exciting. Give 'em a listen.

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Bite The Bullet

Horizon ESCAPE MUSIC

British singer Mick Benton and drummer Graham Cowling have been industrious since reviving their band from the 1980s, *Horizon* being the fifth album of a second run that began some four years ago. Awash with dreamy summertime melodies and gentle breezes of percussion – Mr Mister and Toto are significant influences – by now Bite The Bullet have got it all nailed down.

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Sarayasign

Shadows Of The Dying Light BLACK LODGE

Sarayasign describe their sound as "cinematic rock meets melodic metal". Articulated with acrobatic perfection by Stefan Nykvist, a man whose voice can move the most stubborn of mountains, *Shadows Of The Dying Light* – the last in a trilogy of interlinked releases – is grand in scope and executed with impressive drama.

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Spock's Beard

The Archaeoptimist *MADFISH*

SPOCK'S BEARD
THE ARCHAEOPTIMIST

Still proud to be prog, and still pushing prog's boundaries.

The opening track *Invisible* begins with a dramatic 25-second slice of a cappella, as a cavalcade of voices croon *'hello out there, can you see me… I hope it's not right, but I feel that I might be turning invisible'*. Cheekily, it's not actually a taster of what's to come, although Spock's Beard will do it again with even more vocal pyrotechnics, on *Afourthoughts*. As we ought to know after 33 years and, now, 14 albums, it's hard to predict what they're going to do in the next minute, let alone over a whole album.

Some of the basics remain on their first album since 2018's relatively tentative *Noise Floor*. The Californians are still as complex as Yes – *Going For The One* era mostly, oddly enough - and they scatter harmonies like Beach Boys-sponsored confetti, all while sounding as crisp as a Walkers ready salted.

And if you want prog you've got it, mostly on the epic title track, their first song to break the 20-minute barrier since 2000's *The Great Nothing*. It begins with guitar pyrotechnics, takes a stentorian turn or seven and dips into AOR. And the remaining 17 minutes are just as intriguing

Yet, there are new worlds to conquer. Spock's Beard have never sounded quite so urgent, quite so in your face and (somehow) quite as up to date, whether it's the sizzling Dream Theater-esque guitars of *St. Jerome In The Wilderness* or the moment *Electric Monk* brings out their inner REO Speedwagon. More than anything though, as founder member and guitarist Alan Morse's influence wanes, that of keyboardist Ryo Okumoto waxes. For all that it's a jamboree of sounds and styles, more than anything *The Archaeoptimist* is a keyboards album.

Okumoto introduces *Next Step* with a bravura solo display of pure piano, but he's across almost every track, mostly offering walls of synthesizer sheen somewhere between caped keyboard crusader Rick Wakeman, Tears For Fears and, especially on *Invisible* after that red herring opening, Nice-period Keith Emerson.

Like the best modern prog rock, *The Archaeoptimist* reveals more and more at every new sitting. And if there were to be a takeaway from this impressive barrel of invention, it's that complexity need not be inaccessible. After all those albums, all those decades and a Stakhanovite touring schedule, Spock's Beard ought to know what they're doing. The joy is that they really do.

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John Aizlewood

Treat

The Wild Card *FRONTIERS*

Treat by name, treat by nature.

Just like fellow eighties melodic kingpins and now Frontiers labelmates FM, Treat have scarcely put a foot wrong since their own reunion began almost two decades ago. The Stockholm-based quintet's tenth album in total, *The Wild Card* continues a red-hot streak that began five records back with comeback set *Coup De Grace* back in 2010.

Even in his late sixties, Robert Ernlund retains a voice to die for, and with fellow co-founder and guitarist Anders 'Gary' Wikström by his side, Treat serve up a banquet of melodic delight. Its undoubted highpoint is the retro-anthem *1985*. Even more fromage-tastic than Monty Pythion's iconic comedy sketch The Cheese Shop, its four minutes and two seconds summon a conveyor belt of banal lyrical clichés (*'Lovin' under neon signs/And dreamin' of those summer nights'*) as Treat pay teary-eyed homage to the genre's original big-haired heyday. Breathe in and you can almost smell the spandex.

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Dave Ling

The Scaramanga Six

Dearth *WRATH*

Alternative rock from the Morricone brothers and co.

Over a 30-year career, siblings Paul and Steven Morricone, and their band, have carved out a body of work roughly equivalent to a punk rock Sparks. Their appetite for theatrically charged, irony-leaning rock'n'roll continues to grow on this 12th album, following rapidly on the heels of the 11th, *Glut*, from April this year. Fans will appreciate the manic edge to the scratchy samples and noises, and Lydon-in-PiL vocal vibrato heard on *Waiting For The Rabbit*, but then, as is customary with TSS, it's followed by contrast, as *Pipecleaner Man* is punctuated with power pop *'bah bah bah-ooh'* harmonies. Chord patterns sometimes climb around the back walls of conventional pop melody, but carry us with them on the angular jerks of *Vomit Clock*, the stop-start indie-pop of *Oonie Smoonie*, then the Buzzcockian thrust of *Another Song*. Throughout, though, there's the infectious feeling of listening to a bunch of lifetime loons having a high old time.

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Johnny Sharp

Midlake

A Bridge To Far

BELLA UNION

Finding "the true path".

After a career-risking nine-year gap between their fourth album, *Antiphon*, and 2022's *For The Sake Of Bethel Woods*, the Texas five-piece folk-rock troubadours have got their album release schedule back on track.

It helps that there haven't been any more line-up changes (the drummer is now the only original member) or distractions along the way. And stylistically there has also been an ongoing change from indie to folk since their main singer and songwriter left in 2012 with greater reliance on harmonies.

For The Sake Of Bethel Woods confirmed that they are not the band they once were but *A Bridge To Far* flows directly on from there with many of the songs more theoretical in nature. *The Calling* "explores surrendering to one's true path", and *Days Gone By* pitches "personal struggle with the eternal rhythm of the natural world". Fortunately the music keeps it lighter than that.

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Hugh Fielder

Lunatic Soul

The World Under Unsun

INSIDE OUT MUSIC

Riverside singer's ambient electro solo project shines.

Though Lunatic Soul often gets written about as Mariusz Duda's side project, much to his chagrin, he clearly goes all in with both of his bands. This is less wide skies prog rock and skewed much more to sketches in sound, drones and atmospherics that make you feel that Duda should be scoring movies not helming two separate acts.

Maybe this double album is his calling card to that world. At turns a slow Peter Gabriel like crawl in the lingering build of a *Loop Of Fate*, and then the sublime acoustic guitar and strings of *Good Memories Don't*

PRESS

Want To Die, or the strident, rolling *Hands Made Of Lead*, a pulsing collision of sounds pulled along by a keening saxophone solo. It's a remarkable palette that Duda is working with, and yet none of it seems forced – it's all within his ever inventive wheelhouse.

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Philip Wilding

Black Sabbitch

Unrest In The West *RIPPLE*

The Black Sabbath tributes keep on rolling in.

With 2025 marking the year we lost Ozzy Osbourne and in which, just days earlier, he said the most perfect farewell with the entire rock community coming together to pay tribute and shower him with love, we've not been short of other musicians revisiting the goldmine that is the Sabbath back catalogue.

Enter all-female tribute band Black Sabbitch, whose devotion to their source material has taken them beyond the usual dive bars and out onto the festival circuit at large. *Unrest In The West* is a spirited, unwaveringly faithful live set that is, indeed, drenched in the intensity and heaviness you'd hope for and expect from a Sabbath covers band, taking in less obvious choices such as a thundering version of *A National Acrobat* alongside the wondrously familiar whistle and battery of *The Wizard*.

This is very much a record done just for the fun of it, with no expectations further than making a beautiful racket. You can't help but feel Ozzy would approve.

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Emma Johnston

Tuk Smith & the Restless Hearts

Troubled Paradise *GYPSY ROSE*

Fall under Tuk Smith's songwriting spell.

Anyone familiar with former Biters frontman Tuk Smith's style will not be disappointed with this top-notch four-song EP, a worthy follow up to 2024's *Rogue To Redemption* album. Already established as a songsmith in the mould of, say, Springsteen or Lynott, Smith leans easily into his winning way with words and makes it sound so simple – though some proper craft has obviously gone into the two full-tilt rockers, *Troubled Paradise* and *Runnin' With The Wild Ones*, and the two slower, sad ones, *Sadie Mae* and *Love Don't Live Here Anymore*. Here we have outcasts and rebels, hearts on their sleeves, always on the run with their backs against the wall. There's romance, danger and heartbreak at every turn in Smith's beautifully realised mini-operas and the fact that they all come with instantly memorable hooks and choruses makes them all the more essential. These guys should be way, way bigger.

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Essi Berelian

Dirkschneider & The Old Gang

Babylon *RPM*

Udo's 12-legged, all-singing metal collective release a rollicking LP.

A heavy metal hero, Udo Dirkschneider has the kind of dramatic-sounding name usually reserved for Bond villains, but the German's latest project began as a charity single collaboration during lockdown. *'It takes six to rock'* goes the chorus on opener *It Takes Two To Tango*, and this is the sextet's USP.

Everyone contributes vocals, with Dirkschneider, Manuela Bibert and Peter Baltes – also formerly of Accept – listed as the lead singers. The interplay between Bibert's velvety tones and Dirkschneider's gruff vocals (now 73) is, at times, surprisingly harmonious. That's the case on the title track: a regal, Middle Eastern-inspired epic taken straight from the Dio playbook. It's less so on *Dead Man's Hand*, where the layered voices sound like cursed slop, but much of *Babylon* is perfectly competent, fist-pumping trad metal. *Hellbreaker* and *The Law Of A Madman* both have Judas Priest's crashing-through-the-gates-of-hell oomph. There's life in the Old Gang.

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Chris Lord

The Wytches

Talking Machine *ALCOPOP*

Break out that Nehru jacket, you're gonna need it.

Brighton's own Wytches tap into that late sixties couch-of-woe vibe on their fifth long player with swirly, waltz-paced bummer psych jams guaranteed to slowly melt your brain like a lollipop on a hot sidewalk. The thrill-a-minute *Coffin Nails* and the fuzz-faced title track verge on full-on proto metal, but the cage rattling quickly takes a backseat to organ-laced pill poppers like the dreamy *Romance* and Beatles-esque balladry of *Don't Make It For Me*. There's elements of delicate surf and baroque pop on deck as well. Oh, and closer *Romance End* is so sad I haven't stopped crying for four days. *Talking Machine* is basically a wistful love letter to a long-lost weekend in 1967. Production on the album was carefully crafted to achieve a warm, analogue sound. I'm listening to it via Soundcloud on my work laptop so it's all lost to me, but I'm sure that it sounds amazing in its natural habitat.

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Sleazegrinder

Radiohead

Hail To The Thief (Live Recordings 2003–2009) *XL*

Britpop-transcending misfits bring a controversial album closer to their original design.

For years, Radiohead expressed regret over the way they made 2003's *Hail To The Thief*, saying that the spontaneous recording sessions yielded an album that was over-long and under-refined. However, the alt.rock luminaries now seem to be single-mindedly obsessed with the album's material.

Singer/guitarist Thom Yorke re-worked its songs for a suitably dark *Hamlet* adaptation earlier this year, and now, on the cusp of Radiohead's first shows since 2018, they've released this live compendium. *Backdrifts* and *A Punch-Up At A Wedding* (two tracks Yorke dislikes) have been omitted, while *2 + 2 = 5*'s clamouring ending and the punchy bass of *Where I End And You Begin* are probably more in line with what the band heard in their jamming space while writing and arranging.

It can't and shouldn't replace the original, but this is a fascinating insight into the band's creative process and latter-day regrets. It also feels well worth studying in advance of their incoming European comeback tour.

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Matt Mills

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Pinkshift

Earthkeeper *HOPELESS*

Enraged and matured since 2022's *Love Me Forever*, the Ashrita Kumar-fronted Maryland trio have bolstered their debut's muscular punk-pop with hardcore/nu metal elements and a tangible fury born of 21st century existential dread. Huge vocals, massive riffs, job done. **8/10**

Sunflowers

You Have Fallen… Congratulations *FUZZ CLUB*

Porto, Portugal three-piece's brand of noise-punk wraps a playful, stentorian vocal in thick gloopy layers of intricate experimental distortion. Stops, starts, intense eye-popping blurts of goth-literate ear-bleed scuzz and even the odd Fripp/Eno interval to spice up the cauldron. **7/10**

The Lancasters

The Word Of The Mistral *RETRO VOX/LIFE ON SATURN*

Italian 'psych' quartet Lancasters have more than one string to an engaging bow. *Rules Of The Road* duly echoes '68-ish psych-pop, but there are broader prog ambitions afoot (*Girl In The Sun*). *Hildegarde* even recalls *Destiny Street* era Richard Hell funk. Watch this space. **8/10**

Fuckwolf

Boone *AGITATED*

Frisco's Fuckwolf deal in soft-focus blurt-punk. Ramones rapidity meets Damned ambition in a Hard-Ons sonic mush, but the trio are saved by a canny lo-fi mix where there's always fuzz-bass in your face, guitars nagging at a deranged vocal and post-pop no-wave tropes. **7/10**

Mendozaz

The Completely Fictional History Of This Great Nation of Canada *BANDCAMP*

Somewhere between the Ramones and Vandals, pop-core got 'funny'. I dunno, blame The Dickies. Anyway, Toronto's Mendozaz are all very Fat Wreck, frat boy and whiney, but with fascism on the rise this is so the wrong time for punk to hide behind an apolitical red nose. **4/10**

Native Sun

Concrete Language *TODO*

NYC's Native Sun are being afforded a massive amount of positive press across the pond. They must be great live, because there's really not that much to get excited about here. Ah well, I guess one man's 'stomping rock'n'roll fury' is another man's generic indy-squindy. **5/10**

Ethan Jones

The Ontology *BANDCAMP*

Glam-era songcraft, relentless guitar bothering, a muddied dream pop mix (that's not doing anyone any favours) this tentative, if occasionally brilliant, debut from Nicky Wire's nephew may feature a bass cameo from James Dean Bradfield, but it soars way beyond nepotism. **7/10**

Bonechurch

Deliverance *RIPPLE*

Purporting to have sprouted from a similar demon seed to metal progenitors Sabbath and Zeppelin, Connecticut's Bone Church also aspire to ZZ Top and Skynyrd. So they walk a fine, if heavy, line between boogie doom and groove metal. Chestbeating alpha male stuff. **6/10**

Belair Lip Bombs

Again *THIRD MAN*

Melbourne-based Maisie Everett-fronted 'Australia's best kept secret' power-poppers BLB relaunch on the world stage with a record inspired by Stones, Television and Queen. So that it only ever recalls a fuzz-jangling, beefed-up Sundays is surprising, but yeah, it'll do. **6/10**

Hotel Lux

The Bitter Cup *HOTEL LUX*

There's something of the Animals That Swim about Hotel Lux. Something very '25. They're 20-something everymen, prematurely jaded by saloon bar brooding and this second album marries tipsy musical sophistication to near sprechstimme poolroom philosophy brilliantly. **8/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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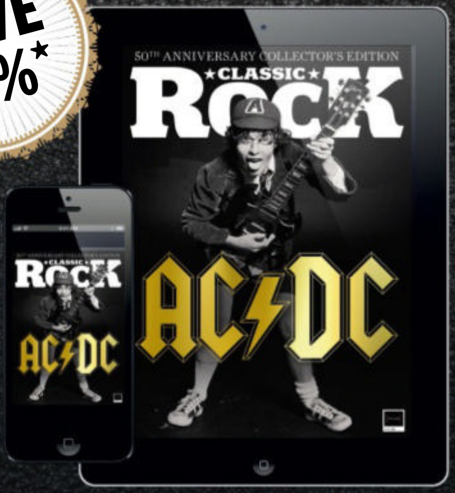
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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

Bold As Love – The Axis: Bold As Love Sessions EXPERIENCE HENDRIX/LEGACY

Up to the skies: Jimi's giant-steps second album, upgraded with bonus tracks.

At the same time in the same studio where the Rolling Stones were making their psychedelic folly, the Jimi Hendrix Experience were sculpting an era classic.

His spiraling creative muse on overdrive after *Are You Experienced*'s May 1967 release at sessions squeezed between one-nighters, *The Wind Cries Mary* and *Burning Of The Midnight Lamp* had signalled an expansion beyond pyrotechnic blues rock, *Axis: Bold As Love* marked Jimi coming of age in the studio, embracing technology with the micro-perfectionism that drove away producer Chas Chandler.

With engineer Eddie Kramer and Roger Mayer supplying innovative gizmos, the album was finished at Olympic when the Stones were abandoning blues roots on *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. Crucially, Jimi kept one foot grounded in earthly matters on tracks such as startling freak flag flying counterculture anthem *If Six Was Nine*, getting funky on *Little Miss Lover*.

Opening with *EXP*'s alien radio interview flying saucer lift-off before *Up From The Skies*' cool Mose Allison shuffle, only magnificently volcanic *Spanish Castle Magic*, *Ain't No Telling* and *You've Got Me Floating* are quintessential Experience. Notwithstanding Noel Redding's token *She's So Fine* and lightweight *Wait Until Tomorrow*, slowies showed Hendrix's desire to evolve with liquid guitar starbursts elevating *One Rainy Wish*, the soaring majesty of *Little Wing* or evoking Curtis Mayfield's quiet sensitivity on *Castles Made Of Sand*. The stratospheric title ballad's climactic phased finale put the final sugar lump on Hendrix's first studio masterpiece.

This bells-'n'-whistles upgrade includes mono and stereo versions plus 40 bonus outtakes, alternative versions, TV and radio appearances. Considering the hours of outtakes in circulation, it's a random tip of the iceberg, including *Mr Bad Luck* (aka *Look Over Yonder*), untitled instrumentals, *Castles…*' backwards guitar track and energised demos of *Little Miss Lover* and *Ain't No Telling* that highlight Mitch Mitchell's polyrhythmic jazz genius. Sadly, *If 6 Was 9* escapes inclusion.

Four incarnations of *Burning Of The Midnight Lamp* show it originally envisioned for *Axis* before becoming fourth single that August (when the *Dee Time* appearance here was broadcast). September's eight song Swedish radio broadcast that starts by blazing through *Sgt. Pepper's* title track is also included.

Thankfully, the disastrous original album cover caused by designers misunderstanding Hendrix's request for an 'Indian' theme and sticking the band's heads on a Hindu poster is replaced by Jimi's childhood dragon painting.

Worth asking the Axis one more time.

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Kris Needs

Humble Pie

Town And Country NICE

Rare second LP back on wax.

Craving escape from stardom with the Herd and Small Faces respectively, Peter Frampton and Steve Marriot formed Humble Pie with Spooky Tooth bassist Greg Ridley and drummer Jerry Shirley in 1969. Holed up in rural Essex, they wrote enough songs for over two albums. Released, along with debut album *As Safe As Yesterday Is* on Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate Records, *Natural Born Bugie* made No.4.

Instantly embraced in the US, Pie were on tour when cash-strapped Oldham assembled *Town And Country* from their stash. But the album couldn't save Immediate and went down with the label.

Kenney Jones's Nice label is reissuing *Town And Country* in his Immediate 60th anniversary series (remastered with 24-page booklet). Tangibly homaging The Band, country and folk flavours lace Frampton's *Take Me Back*, Marriott's *The Sad Bag Of Shaky Jake* and Shirley's *Cold Lady* (Ridley's mystical *The Light Of Love* sitars it up). *Silver Tongue* and *Down Home Again* presage the heavier sound soon to bring huge success on A&M while *Heartbeat* covers their beloved Buddy Holly.

The CD adds six tracks from 2000's *The Immediate Anthology*, including jams, alternative versions, two from March 1970's last Olympic session and the stunningly powerful version of Ray Charles' *Drown In My Own Tears* recorded at their Essex bolthole, with Marriott's tour de force vocal enhanced by reeds legend Lyn Dobson's lustrous brass section.

A welcome artefact.

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Kris Needs

Ten Years After

Ssssh CHRYSALIS

Speed kings go up a gear.

After taking Woodstock by storm in the summer of '69, Ten Years After continued skyward with the December release of their third studio album, *Ssssh*.

Much lauded for his quicksilver guitar pyrotechnics, Alvin Lee also sang like a rock'n'roller in the tradition of Jerry Lee Lewis or Eddie Cochran. With Leo Lyons at head-tossing full pelt on bass, Chick Churchill pounding keys, Ric Lee on drums, for a few golden years they were unstoppable. Following the standard bluesology of their debut LP and the trippy studio follow-up *Stonedhenge*, both produced by Mike Vernon, *Ssssh* arrived as a short, sharp statement of utter confidence. Taking centre stage is *If You Should Love Me*, which skates along astride Lee's almost incognito speed guitar.

The third CD in this set (also available as two LPs) is a live recording from Helsinki in December 1969, rescued from Finnish radio archives and remixed. The Cream-like performance includes *I May Be Wrong* from '68 live album *Undead*, *No Title* from *Stonedhenge* and *The Hobbit*, with its lengthy drum solo. The 18-minute finale, *I Can't Keep From Crying Sometimes*, sees Lee taunting bursts of *Sunshine of Your Love*, *Foxy Lady* and *Peter Gunn. Good Morning Little Schoolgirl* appears in both studio and live form. Irresistibly feral, even by the standard of '69. Great balls of fire indeed.

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Claudia Elliott

Pavement

Reissues MATADOR

41 tracks of irreverent indie.

Pavement are, above all, fun. Stephen Malkmus and company long ago mastered the fundamentals of rock: oblique humour, sly references, The Fall, a *great* riff, magnetism, even the odd early seventies Bowie B-side. Each song is a romp through a playground where the cool kids crack the sharpest, stupidest jokes – but never leave you feeling too excluded.

The brilliantly titled *Heckler's Choice* is exactly that: a collection of fan favourites (*Cut Your Hair, Major Leagues, Spit On A Stranger*) clustered together like a tight-knit gang. Shards of guitars spark, shred and scatter, lyrics droll and tempered, timing impeccable. *Summer Babe* glimmers with the frosty allure of NYC in the fall, coaxing and teasing, while *Range Life* slices through the MTV generation with wicked ease. This is the album for newcomers, but veteran fans will want it too.

Pavement OST is the one that

AVALON/GETTY IMAGES

will have diehards salivating, though: inconclusive yet irresistible, a ragtag mix of material from Alex Ross Perry's not-quite-biopic *Pavements* (2024). Live cuts, rehearsal tapes, brief film snippets, sardonic asides – reality and fiction jostle for space among the sudden silences and welcome clatter. Some of it is absolute garbage, not that it matters. Idyllic moments like *Filmore Jive* in endless sprawl, and a tentative *Shoot The Singer* casually rub up next to deprecating outtakes and oddly charming deletions.

It feels random, almost too much, and yet it totally works – just like the band itself. Or does it? Either way, it's irresistible. Available on 2xLP or 2xCD.

Both 🟥🟥🟥🟥🟥🟥🟥🟥⬜⬜

Everett True

Wings

Wings *UMG*

Collection crushes myth that Macca's seventies were mid.

Wings were not to the seventies what The Beatles were to the sixties. They did not, as is claimed here, define the decade. Others, representing glam and punk, did. Yet the more decades pass from contemporaneous context, the brighter the dazzle of Macca's muse in that era shines. It's time to stop quoting the old Alan Partridge gag with a smirk. They *were* what The Beatles could have been if Paul had been given free rein, and as such, flew like a bird which is astonished at its own gifts between savant inspiration, sporadic silliness, and some very, very good rock music in between. This "best of", then, cherry-picks the torrents of genius, and is therefore titanic.

The 1LP version is heaven-sent hitsville, from the euphoric rush of *Jet* to the gorgeous *My Love* to the mesmerising, undervalued *With A Little Luck*. Of course, *Mull Of Kintyre* means it gets docked a point. The 3LP version is where things loosen up, as (relative) deep cuts strut their stuff. There's the poised, oily sleaze of *Letting Go* and *Let Me Roll It*; the adrenalin of *Junior's Farm* and *Helen Wheels*. The charms of *Some People Never Know*, *Arrow Through Me* and the melancholy *London Town*. Wings were a hell of a band, too: it's almost as if McCartney's game recognised game. And that singer? Able to swoop from shepherding a rock track along till its heart raced to wringing emotion from ballads like a soul god. The wonder of it all.

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Chris Roberts

Hüsker Dü

1985: The Miracle Year

NUMERO

Live set captures alt. hardcore maestros at their best.

"Miracle Year" is spot-on. In January 1985, Hüsker Dü released *New Day Rising*. Despite its generic production frustratingly restraining its power of artistry, it somehow topped the groundbreaking psyche post-hardcore of the previous year's *Zen Arcade*. Then in September, Dü released *Flip Your Wig*, pointing the way forward to a more accessible cleaner sound after being freed of SST Records' hardcore fundamentalist inhouse producer.

Documenting Dü at the very zenith of their career, this four-disc vinyl boxset features a full hometown Minneapolis show at the time of *New Day Rising*'s release, plus an additional 20 tracks recorded live from throughout the same year. Dü perform with frenetic back-to-back urgency, reaching track four in just over five minutes. Millisecond pauses between songs are punctuated by feedback squall as if the speakers are still catching up with the lightning riffs Mould purges from his Flying V.

An extensive booklet comprises period pics/flyer artwork with a feature reflecting on the band in the mid-eighties by bestselling Replacements biographer, Bob Mehr.

By the time of *Flip Your Wig*'s release, Dü were already beginning sessions for major label debut, *Candy Apple Grey* and road-testing tracks in late 1985 – also included here. Punk never sounded more soulful.

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Alex Burrows

West, Bruce & Laing

Out In The Fields (Albums 72-74) *ESOTERIC*

Mountain climbing.

Power trios were a recurring feature of Jack Bruce's career and the timing was right when Mountain guitarist Leslie West and drummer Corky Laing were picking up the pieces after bassist (and former Cream producer) Felix Pappalardi left.

Mountain were not Cream but they were close enough for Bruce to reprise his role and for listeners to spot the difference. There is no *Sunshine Of Your Love* here – there is no *Mississippi Queen* either – but both West Bruce & Laing's studio albums, 1972's *Why Doncha* and 1973's *Whatever Turns You On*, are chockful of heavy blues riffs. West – an underrated guitarist – and Bruce fit in easily together. Bruce shades the exchanges on *Why Doncha*, particularly on *The Doctor* and *Pollution Woman*, but West comes into his own on *Whatever Turns You On*.

The Posthumous *Live N' Kickin'* in 1974 was an indulgence that undid some of the reputation they'd built up. There were only four tracks, and only one of them is their's. A cover of the Stones' *Play With Fire* turns out to be the lyrics jammed on to another song. Bruce's playing is somewhat erratic. And the cover of *Politician* just invites unfair comparisons with Cream.

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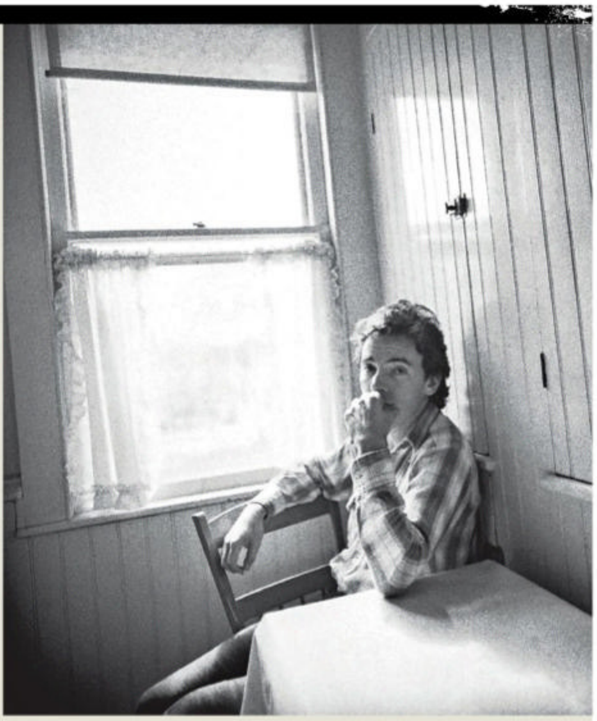
Bruce Springsteen

Nebraska '82: Expanded Edition *SONY*

Stark acoustic masterpiece now available in full-bodied form.



PRESS

The story behind the making of Bruce Springsteen's 1982 album *Nebraska* is so compelling, and such a significant chapter in his career, it's now the subject of a dramatised feature film, *Bruce Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere*. And while there's no getting around the fact that this five disc set has been released to promote said film – even the Boss isn't above cross-platform media marketing – it still succeeds as the last revealing word on the album's gestation.

That legendary story in short: Springsteen recorded the demos for *Nebraska* at home on a four-track tape machine with the intention of remaking them with the E Street Band. After five days in the studio, during which they recorded eight songs, Springsteen eventually decided that he preferred the haunted feel of his original solo cassette versions and put those out as the finished album. But a myth has persisted that some of the so-called 'Electric Nebraska' recordings pointed towards the bombastic stadium-tooled sound of Springsteen's next album, *Born in the USA*. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we discover here. Springsteen assembled a stripped-down E Street Band entirely in tune with the desolate folk-country mood of the slower numbers and – per his apt description in the liner notes – the "punk rockabilly" demands of songs such as *Johnny 99*. The standout track in that latter mode is a previously unreleased version of *Born in the USA*, which wouldn't sound out of place on a Hüsker Dü or early Replacements record. It suggests an alternate reality where Springsteen abandoned his desire for mainstream success in favour of a major cult career *à la* Neil Young.

The set also includes unused songs from his home recordings, a skeletal demo of *Pink Cadillac*, everything from the 1982 solo studio sessions in which he attempted to recapture that intimate bedroom vibe, a remastered *Nebraska*, and an exclusive 2025 live performance – also available to watch on the bonus Blu-Ray disc – where he performs the album for the first time in its entirety.

There's no audience or chat from the Boss – it takes place in an empty theatre. A solitary pursuit, true to *Nebraska*'s original intentions.

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Paul Whitelaw

APPLE CORPS/PRESS

The Beatles

Anthology 4 *APPLE*

THE BEATLES
ANTHOLOGY 4

The bottom of the Abbey Road barrel approaches.

The Beatles long ago ceased to be just a band: they have now passed into the realms of legend. And like most legends, a lot of the original reality has been distorted and turned into mythology. Even the music, once the cornerstone of the Beatles' existence, has started to change. Once upon a time, there was an official canon of Beatle music: it started with *Love Me Do* and ended with *Let It Be*, and that – a few oddities apart – was it. But in the nineties, reality began to warp. The three remaining Beatles got back together to rework some old John Lennon demos, including *Free As A Bird* and *Real Love*, released them as Beatles singles, and put them on three new compilations. The *Anthology* CDs weren't pure archive either: they featured remixed songs, backing tracks, and Frankenstein assemblies of different takes. The back catalogue was no longer sacred: it was as if someone had thrown all the tapes in the air and put them back together in a new, more modern order. Since then, there have been remixed Beatle collections (*The Love Album*), remixed Beatle movies (*Get Back*) and more new Beatle songs (*Now And Then*).

And now there is *Anthology 4*, which is not, as its title strongly hints, a further instalment in the Beatles' story, but a compilation of (mostly) out-takes, remixes and cut-and-shut jobs. This time round, there are few surprises, largely because 23 of the 36 tracks on *Anthology 4* have already been released on other collections: in fact, there are no surprises, no songs that fans have been hoping for since the dawn of time itself (*Carnival Of Light*, basically). What we do get are 13 unreleased songs – mostly different takes and rehearsal versions – and an entire vinyl side dedicated to *Free As A Bird*, *Real Love*, and *Now And Then*, as if to say, yes, these are proper Beatles songs, just like *She Loves You* and *Penny Lane*.

As a collection, *Anthology 4* charts a parallel path through the Beatles' career, one with a tacky postscript in the 21st century. As a Beatles record, it is not very good, offering nothing exciting in terms of rarities (wow, the "strings only" version of *Something* from the *Abbey Road 50th anniversary edition*) or insight. The only good thing about it is that there isn't an *Anthology 5*. Give it time, though…

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David Quantick

The Who

Who Are You (Super Deluxe Edition) *UNIVERSAL*

Who's last, but not least.

The eighth Who album, and the last with drummer Keith Moon who passed away a week or two after its release, was partly inspired by Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend's boredom at the prospect of playing old material again, as directly addressed in *New Song*. It also has some lingering elements of the failed *Lifehouse* project Townshend would never truly get over and is The 'Oo's response to punk.

Keyboard-heavy and experimental – the flagging Moon couldn't get his head around the odd time signature of *Music Must Change* – it houses in the unassailable title track possibly their last truly great song, inspired by both an on-stage improvisation and a night on the tiles when a pissed-off and pissed-up Townshend ran into some Sex Pistols and a sympathetic policeman.

This exhaustive edition includes Glyn Johns's rejected mix (he butted heads with Daltrey – literally) which is preferably guitar- and bass-heavy in places, interesting curios like the band version of the Townshend solo cut *Empty Glass*, Townshend guide vocals, good-humoured and arse-kicking rehearsal tapes from Shepperton Studios, and a couple of discs from the ill-fated American tour with unfairly maligned Moon replacement Kenney Jones, who sounds more than adequate at this remove.

While it's no *Quadrophenia* or *Who's Next*, it's an interesting record from a band admirably questioning and pushing themselves, and this package, complimented by Matt Kent's superb sleeve notes, is how all deluxe releases should be done.

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Pat Carty

Super Furry Animals

Love Kraft *ROUGH TRADE*

Interstellar Americana from the cosmic Welsh visionaries.

While the rest of UK alt.rock was zinging along in The Strokes' new-wave wake by 2005, Welsh psych-rock visionaries Super Furry Animals were drifting further Out There in their kaleidoscopic *Love Kraft*. That this deluxe anniversary reissue of their seventh album includes a 10-minute version of opening track *Zoom!* with its oceanic splashes, space twinkles and climactic opera choirs, is just one of many indications of how remotely SFA were operating from the tautness of the times.

The record marked a creative expansion, with the whole band contributing songs and lead vocals for the first time, but they were all clearly on parallel intergalactic courses. Upon alt. country, Welsh folk and classic pop foundations – The Beatles, the Beach Boys, The Byrds, CSNY, retro soul, a spot of samba – they all built hazy and hallucinogenic concoctions of cosmic Americana. Drummer Dafydd Ieuan's lustrous stand-out *Atomik Lust* burst from Coldplayish heartbreaker into fuzz blues freak-outs. Keyboard player Cian Ciaran's *Walk You Home* predicted Arctic Monkeys' eventual space lounge turn, with extra added 10cc art-prog touches. Gruff Rhys contributed sci-fi funk rave-ups (*Lazer Beam*), psychedelic song cycles (*Cloudberries*) and primal groovers about the dinosaurs welcoming their fatal meteor (*Psyclone!*), while group effort *Oi Frango* appears to have been written by Welsh surf rock robots mid-raygun battle.

The additional B-sides and demos further reveal the wild and imaginative minds at work here – *Rock'n'Roll Flu* mates Byrds and Beach Boys and somehow creates MGMT, *Bing Bong* is pure comedy krautrock, and the gothic country *Colonise The Moon* posits sending all of the worst elements of society into space to fight it out among themselves.

Retrospect doesn't see *Love Kraft* docking alongside SFA's greatest albums, but it's well worth beaming up to.

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Mark Beaumont

Mike Oldfield

Amarok *UMC/MERCURY*

Moody machine music.

Recorded at a time when Mike Oldfield was very unhappy with his record company Virgin Records and its perpetual demand for a second *Tubular Bells*, *Amarok* is the product of frustration, inspiration and deep-seated emotion, and is duly infused with a lot of feeling, mostly rage. And so in among the jigs, the choral singing and the recorders there are deafening keyboard stabs, bursts of angry guitar and Oldfield's own sampled voice asking *Happy?*

The result is one of Oldfield's best, an uninterrupted hour of music that sounds like it was made in a fever and for a reason. *Amarok* is full of variety, light and dark, fury and comedy, ancient drums and modern sampling, lyricism, and telling Richard Branson to fuck off in a secret message. This new version chops the record up into 15-minute segments, which works, but rather goes against the relentless 60 minute suite of the original.

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David Quantick

Clutch

Psychic Warfare (10th Anniversary Edition)

WEATHERMAKER MUSIC

Purple vinyl anniversary edition for perennial fan fave.

CLUTCH
PSYCHIC WARFARE

How was 2015 for you? History tells us that the Tory party shed the Lib Dem coalition and took complete control of power in the UK, a disgraced Sepp Blatter fell from grace at FIFA, and Jeremy Clarkson punched his producer in the face and stalked off *Top Gear*, never to return. Meanwhile somewhere in the Texas hill country town of Dripping Springs, Clutch were in the process of making one of the most enduring albums of their entire career.

Following on from the electrifying *Earth Rocker*, Clutch made a record that sounded and felt like the score for an unmade Tarantino flick – case in point, *Our Lady Of Electric Light* could play as the slow build to a cinematic motel murder spree with ease. Elsewhere it sounded like the band had driven into the Texan swamplands, dropped peyote, lost their ride, come to an abandoned house and found a set of lyrics in their own handwriting that none of them could remember writing. *X-Ray Visions* – an ode to conspiracy theories, drugs, sex, horoscope and Republicans – is that song.

Sadly, as wonderfully gung-ho an album that this is, this reissue on purple-smoke vinyl and housed in a swirling, psychedelic gatefold sleeve is more artifice than art. No tempting extras from those seemingly strung-out sessions under an endless Texan sky or crazed demos for a set of songs that would help define the Clutch legend, wild eyed memories, and all.

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Philip Wilding

Sparks

1975-1976 EDSEL

Three-disc set reaffirms the Maels' genius.

As brilliantly contrarian as they were creative, 1975 found Sparks confounding expectations once again with *Indiscreet*, their fifth studio album. Leaving behind the glam rock of predecessors *Kimono My House* and *Propaganda*, here Ron and Russell Mael teamed up with producer Tony Visconti for their most gleefully excessive release during their tenure with Island Records. With the producer piling on orchestras, brass and vaudeville flourishes, the Maels ramped up the pomp and perversity. *Hospitality On Parade* marches with a twisted absurdity, *Get In The Swing* is a mischievous subversion of Broadway, while the baroque *Under The Table With Her* evokes Victoriana. It baffled then, but the album now sounds fearlessly adventurous.

And so the confusion continued. Dismissed in certain quarters as a misstep, the following year's *Big Beat* feels like a recalibration and a flexing of the Maels' muscles. Relocating to the US and hiring a tougher band, the orchestral grandeur of yore was ditched in favour of crunching riffs and punchy hooks. *Big Boy* and *Fill-Er-Up* swagger with rock'n'roll gusto, while *Everybody's Stupid* paves the way for *Clash City Rockers*, all the time maintaining their trademark wit. And, as evidenced by the third disc of B-sides that include the sardonic *Looks Aren't Everything* and a lush reimagining of The Beatles' *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, Sparks weren't simply filling up space.

Packaged together in a seven-inch single fold-out cover, these records underline Sparks' greatest strength – their absolute refusal to stand still. Despite the lack of hits here, Sparks were clearly playing the long game.

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Julian Marszalek

Dinosaur Jr

The Black Session (Live In Paris 1993) CHERRY RED

First CD edition of legendary gig including Murph and Mike.

DINOSAUR JR

There is very little messing about or on-stage banter here at Maison De La Radio, Paris as J Mascis and co. launch into a nine-song set with such alacrity it's as if they are anxious to grab a nightcap on the Champs Elysees before turning in. But it's a storming set. Opener *Quest* is Mascis in excelsis, enervated, drooping vocals and hurricane-like guitars – not unlike Neil Young but with the disparity taken to greater extremes. His take on The Cure's *Just Like Heaven* is rendered with extra, raucous lashings of wah-wah, vocal tones still more helplessly morose than Robert Smith.

Freak Scene is bent, panned, stretched, while *Keep The Glove* is overwhelmed in its own dry-ice emissions of guitar. It concludes with *Thumb*, Hendrix-like filtered guitars, a thing of beauty. Dinosaur Jr at the height of their powers.

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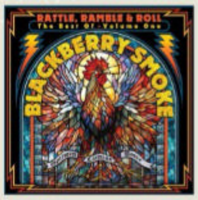
David Stubbs



Blackberry Smoke

Rattle, Ramble & Roll: The Best Of Volume One

3 LEGGED

Southern rock flagbearers serve up overstuffed career-spanning comp.

PRESS

Southern rock will never die. As long as humanity clings to this scorched, dying rock spinning hopelessly in space, there'll be a bunch of dudes in cowboy hats choogling away like its 1972.

Blackberry Smoke are proof of its unswerving durability. These Atlanta, Georgia gentlemen have been upholding southern rock's bell-bottomed traditions since 2001 – as far away from today as that was from the plane crash that did for Ronnie Van Zant. Over that time, trends have come and gone several times over, none of which have registered in the slightest on them.

Rattle, Ramble & Roll is an old-school 'best of' album stretched out over a new school 22 tracks – their dusty southern hearts might lie in the seventies but their sensibilities are squarely in the era of the Spotify Playlist, albeit a Spotify Playlist that requires parting with cold, hard cash to own a physical copy of.

Musically, Blackberry Smoke do what Blackberry Smoke do – Skynyrd without the aggro, Black Crowes without the noodling. But their directness is their strength. *Payback's A Bitch, Prayer For The Little Man* and the stellar *Ain't Much Left Of Me* (one of six tracks here from 2012's career-high *The Whippoorwill*) pack a hard-rock punch. And they can magic up a sense of place like few other bands – the wistful *Azalea* sways like a cornfield in a breeze and the sun-baked *The Whippoorwill* itself is quietly cinematic in the way it evokes endless southern summer days.

Even so, an hour and 25 minutes of this stuff is a bit much, an all-you-can-eat barbecue that looks delicious at the start but has turned into an indistinguishable mush by the end. Certainly no one needed to be reminded of the joyless boogie of 2015's *Rock And Roll Again*, or be subjected to a risible live version of Little Richard's *Southern Child* ('*Lawdy, lawdy, lawdy*' indeed). That 'Volume One' postscript looks more like a threat than a promise.

Still, one person's indistinguishable mush is another's shit-kickin' southern rock party. The band have made it this far on their own terms, and they're not going to bow to other people's opinions at this stage. The world keeps spinning, Blackberry Smoke keep choogling.

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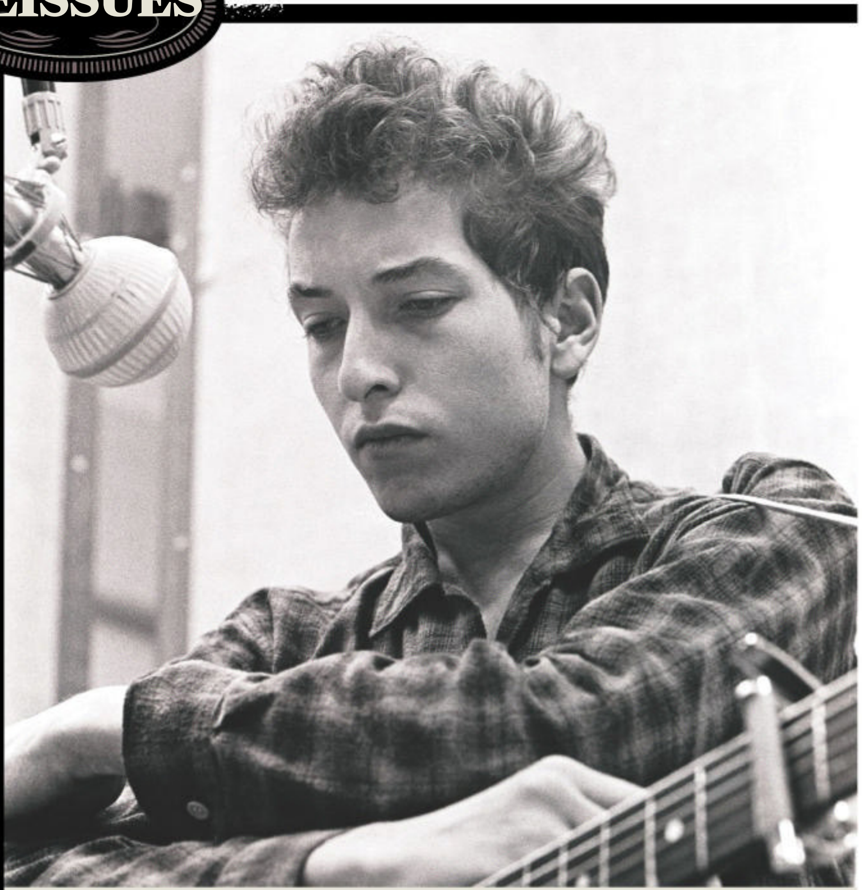
Dave Everley



Bob Dylan

The Bootleg Series Volume 18: Through The Open Window 1956-1963 COLUMBIA

Bob Dylan
Through The Open Window
The Bootleg Series Vol. 18
1956-1963

A legend ascends in the latest forensic deep dive into Dylan's back pages.

The Bootleg Series, which began back in 1991, has always been a rich and often revelatory treasure trove of Dylan rarities, but the latest edition is particularly fascinating. It's a time capsule, a vast piece of audio verite, in which we follow Robert Zimmerman from his Minnesota origins as a teenage rock 'n' roller all the way to the Greenwich Village folk scene, the March on Washington and eventually a watershed concert at Carnegie Hall. A vivid chronicle of his rapid ascent and growth as an artist, it captures the thrill of a young man finding his voice while making an indelible mark on history.

Beginning with his earliest known recording from 1956, a scratchy DIY 78 recorded in a Minnesota music shop with his high school band, it goes on to chart his arrival in NYC as a Woody Guthrie-obsessed interpreter of folk 'n' blues standards who effortlessly beguiled the bohemian coffee house crowd. Via live performances and tapings made for radio or in the homes of friends, the entire set presents such an intoxicating evocation of that whole Village milieu you can practically taste the wine and cigarette smoke. It also emphasises just how quickly Dylan developed as a songwriter; picture jaws dropping as he unveils new protest anthems such as *Masters Of War*.

Further highlights include numerous outtakes from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, concert introductions in which the emcees have fully bought into his fabricated backstory as a son of New Mexico who worked the travelling carnivals, a song from his lost BBC television play *Madhouse On Castle Street*, some amusing between-song patter that's essentially stand-up, and, of course, the stellar 1963 Carnegie Hall concert that pointed towards the next stage of his career. This immersive story of a star busy bein' born is available in an eight CD Deluxe set including 139 tracks – 48 of which are previously unreleased, and 38 of which are extremely rare – plus 2 CD and 4 LP highlight editions, both containing 42 tracks. The Deluxe set also includes a 125-page hardback book featuring extensive liner notes from esteemed American historian and Dylanologist Sean Wilentz. That's a whole lotta Dylan for your dollar, and it's worth every cent.

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Paul Whitelaw

A Perfect Circle

Mer De Noms Definitive Sound Series Vinyl

INTERSCOPE/CAPITOL

Alt.metal supergroup's debut gets glossy vinyl treatment.

aperfectcircle

A Perfect Circle were the first great supergroup of the millennium. Debuting at No. 4 on the US Billboard album charts, *Mer De Noms* pre-empted a bubble of similar post-2000 supergroups like Audioslave and Velvet Revolver who'd enjoy similar chart success. Unlike those groups, however, A Perfect Circle couldn't rely on its members' reputation to generate buzz. With the exception of vocalist Maynard James Keenan, who had achieved acclaim with Tool, and perhaps Josh Freese, who was drumming in Guns N' Roses at the time, none of its members had achieved star status, meaning *Mer De Noms* soared on the quality of its songwriting.

And what quality it is. Although formed by sometime Tool/Smashing Pumpkins/Nine Inch Nails guitar tech Billy Howerdel, *Mer De Noms* feels as much Keenan's baby as Howerdel's, intensely personal lyrics contending with topics like antitheism (*Judith, Thomas*) and sexuality (*Magdalena, Thinking Of You*). Arriving as Tool were making the leap from alt.metal agitators to ponderous prog metal princelings, APC struck the perfect balance between radio-friendly choruses and overly ornate instrumentation that made songs like *3 Libras* or *Sleeping Beauty* a buffet of tones and textures, still vibrant and unique even after 25 years.

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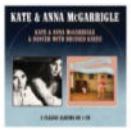
Rich Hobson

Kate & Anna McGarrigle

Kate & Anna McGarrigle / Dancer With Bruised Knees

CHERRY RED

Twofer package of Canadian sisters' career-defining work.



These two Montreal-born sisters spent a decade on the folk scene before establishing themselves as a duo with their first two albums in 1976 and 1977, now released together as a double. And their strongest collective charms seem – such as the beautiful heavenly harmonies that lift up *Heart Like A Wheel*, Anna's composition which had already been a hit for Linda Ronstadt before the pair's self-titled debut album came out in 1976. There's also a certain girlish quality to the sentiments of *Kiss And Say Goodbye* as the then-30-year-old Kate gushes, '*Wanna kiss you 'til my mouth gets numb*', and on the warm nostalgia of their take on *Swimming Song* (written by Kate's ex-husband and father of singers Martha and Rufus, Loudon Wainwright III) as well as the ramshackle folk accompaniment of *Travellin' On For Jesus*. With Joe Boyd producing, further bluegrassy arrangement elegance can be heard in the button accordion accompanying Francophone numbers such as *Complainte Pour Ste Catherine* and, on 1977's *Dancer With Bruised Knees* recorder on *Blanche Come La Neige* and *Perrine Etait Servante*. The latter album has the fuller sound, but together these records are the perfect introduction to one of North America's great folk families.

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Johnny Sharp

Status Quo

On The Level

EDSEL (CD)/DEMON (VINYL)

Perfectly balanced. Originally.

When this eighth album, the fifth in their boogie-led "From the makers of" series, was released in 1975, Quo were at their peak. Its mix of writing credits and lead singers garlanded *On The Level* with glorious style-shifts, making it the album most likely to impress the cynics.

Witness Rick Parfitt's hard-rockin' *Little Lady* giving way to the slow blues of *Most Of The Time* (by Francis Rossi and Bob Young); the same pairing's riotous *Down Down* (the number 1 single) and *What To Do* bookending the gentler reflections of bassist Alan Lancaster's *Broken Man*. Virtually faultless (**8/10**).

For its 50th anniversary it re-emerges as a double vinyl album. The second disc, though, features the same bonus tracks as the 2005 remaster (all three from the *Status Quo Live!* EP and a *Roadhouse Blues* recorded live in Germany) plus just six of the 13 from an oft-bootlegged 1975 Mainz radio broadcast. That's just tight-fisted.

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Neil Jeffries

SANDY SPEISER, SONY MUSIC ARCHIVES/PRESS

The Mission

Blue DEMON

Goth veterans go off piste.

Two words: contractual obligation. Not the best set of circumstances for creating an album and it shows – 1996's *Blue* found Wayne Hussey coming up with a set of songs that are raw, stripped back and, frankly, pretty dreary. Light years away from the grandeur of their eighties pomp, The Mission sound like they are casting around for direction and largely getting lost. There's nothing on this National Album Day exclusive that has not been reissued before, though this LP does include *Perfect Sunrise* and *Coming Home (Godlike Version)*, the b-sides to *Coming Home*. *Perfect Sunrise* is short and discordant, a bit like a goth XTC decorated with sci-fi noises, while *Coming Home (Godlike Version)* eschews the main version's grungy riff for strange strings and odd percussion.

Elsewhere, *Get Back To You* reminds of the Stones, *Damaged* feels like a miserable Beatles and *Cannibal* sounds like something Siouxsie And The Banshees could have had some fun with. There are some decent tunes lurking within – *Drown In Blue, Alpha Man* and the spaghetti western-esque *That Tears Shall Drown The Wind* but the skeletal production does not help, nor does the lack of scale. Unsurprisingly, following a short tour, the band went on hiatus.

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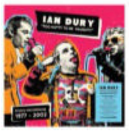
Essi Berelian

Ian Dury

Too Nutty To Be Naughty 1977-2002 EDSEL

Nine-CD box set from maverick genius.



Greater than the sum of their parts, the songwriting partnership of Ian Dury and Chaz Jankel was essential to the frontman's notoriety. Dury wasn't a lone genius: the Blockheads were virtuosos. All the proof required for the invincibility of bassist Norman Watt-Roy and drummer Charley Charles' rhythm section is when they were replaced by the usually formidable Sly and Robbie on 1981's *Lord Upminster*. Which doesn't gel anywhere close to 1977's *New Boots and Panties!!* or 1979's *Do It Yourself.*

With lungs evidently the size of airships, saxophonist Davey Payne's double-sax solo on the most avant No.1 in UK chart history, *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*, is undefeated. The track is a calling card, an encapsulation of Dury and the Blockheads' masterful compositions and arrangements. Payne's dissonant jazz squawk – the perfect foil to Dury's Lear-esque literary nonsense lyrics – combats the dramatic tonal clustering keyboards of Jankel and Micky Gallagher, underpinned by John Turnbull's rocksteady guitar. Payne dominates with a literal breathtaking 10-second-long one-note blast, bookending the middle eight instrumental. It's the British *Sister Ray*: a sonic similarity to Reed and Cale trying to deliberately drown each other out, but lockstepped in polite harmonious synergy as opposed to ad hominem discordance.

Always worth returning to, the Ian Dury discog – with and without The Blockheads – is featured here in full, save for the 1975 Kilburn And The High Roads debut. All discs include non-album singles as with previous CD reissues. But the 20th century's greatest lyricist of the English condition really deserves a more sumptuous vinyl boxset. What a waste.

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Alex Burrows

Gracious!

The Recordings 1970-1971

ESOTERIC

Goodness Gracious me!

Me neither. Don't know what kind of band they were when they first started out supporting The Who in 1968 but after the quartet supported King Crimson on tour the following year they bought a Mellotron and became a prog band. As you do.

Musically they were adequate with minor classical knowledge but little compositional skills or vocal character.

On their self-titled debut they come across like a heavy Focus on *Introduction* and then spend ages segueing chord sequences on *Heaven* before coming up with a jaunty but inappropriate melody and some strained vocals. *Hell* starts with some unlikely xylophone and then resorts to distorted keyboards. After a heavy-handed *Fugue* (by Bach) they turn into Vanilla Fudge for the 17 minute finale, right down to a cover of Beethoven's *Für Elise*.

They were dropped before their second album but managed to sneak it out on another label. Side one was a 24-minute epic that made Pink Floyd sound concise and finished with an anthem overheard from outside the court of the crimson king.

Somehow they landed themselves a spot at the 1970 Isle Of Wight Festival which makes its belated (?) premiere on CD and DVD.

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Hugh Fielder

Kate Bush

Best Of The Other Sides

FISH PEOPLE

Overlooked oddities.

Kate Bush has enjoyed a career that can best be described as long – she signed to EMI around the same time as the Sex Pistols – and varied. The latter word is as appropriate as hell: Bush began her career writing prog chamber pop that sounded both dreamlike and terrifying, moved through various world musics so fast that she ended up recording a duet with Peter Gabriel, and continued to make records that were, somehow, both idiosyncratic and commercial. Along the way, she showered the b-sides of her hit singles with odder songs than usual, covered the work of those she admired, contributed to TV and film soundtracks, and even enjoyed the odd remix as was then the fashion. In 2019, she gathered together several of these loose tracks in a two-CD set called, aptly, *The Other Sides*. 34 tracks long, it still didn't contain everything: and this new version, which is as its title suggests a collection collected from a collection, contains even fewer songs but does add, for completists, some slightly new edits and mixes – *Experiment IV* has a longer introduction, for example, while *You Want Alchemy?* has been re-EQ'd (the other songs from *The Other Side* will apparently be released digitally). The result is yet another tinkered-with curation of Bush's work (sometimes it feels like Kate Bush has remixed, revoiced or re-recorded everything in her backcat) which still sounds amazing.

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David Quantick

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

The Zombies

Odessey And Oracle BEECHWOOD PARK

Remastered for vinyl in its original mono form, this baroque/chamber pop masterpiece is finally able to deliver every single aspect of its singular sonic majesty (brass parts excised from its hastily-remixed-for-stereo '67 debut are reinstated) and the sound? Pin-sharp. **9/10**

Sex Pistols

Never Mind The Bollocks vinyl RHINO HI-FI

A limited (individually numbered 5,000 copies) edition of the Pistols' sole '77 album promises a High Fidelity mix (and new liner notes from producer Chris Thomas). Did anyone, when listening to this flawless punk catalyst, ever think "I wish its Fi- was Hi-er?" Did they balls. **10/10**

Circle Jerks

Golden Shower Of Hits TRUST

Keith Morris is 70. Imagine that. Anyway, here's the '83 third album from what-the-former-Black-Flag-singer-did-next combo, Circle Jerks, all buffed up and still as hardcore as shit. Evergreen *Repo Man* classic *Coup d'État* shines, but no extras? It's not even 28 minutes. **6/10**

Queen

A Night At The Opera (50th Anniversary) UNIVERSAL

You may have heard of this one. It's got *Bohemian Rhapsody* on it. You know the one. The Scaramouche one that kept Laurel and Hardy off the top over Xmas '75? Anyway, it's out – should you need it again – this time on clear vinyl (or *Bo Rhap* on blue 7"). Roll up! **8/10**

Prince And The Revolution

Around The World In A Day (40th Anniversary)

NPG/PAISELY PARK

Arriving in the wake of *Purple Rain*'s imperious arrest of the international zeitgeist, Prince's psychedelic detour (complete with *Raspberry Beret* and *Paisley Park*) celebrates its 40th with first time remaster CD, LP plus 2CD and 3LP sets that add little other than remixes. **7/10**

Tom Waits

Nighthawks At The Diner (50th Anniversary) ANTI-

This live in-the-studio/faux nightclub double stands as the ultimate snapshot of early Waits, bridging his crucial metamorposis from jazz-literate singer-songwiter to the trademarked, post-Bukowski gravel-voiced barfly persona that sealed his legend. Yellow vinyl, no extras. **7/10**

Bill Wyman

Stone Alone (50th Anniversary) DEMON

Expanded exactly as for CD, Wyman's second '76 solo set, now stretched over two purple vinyls, might be star-studded (Dr John, Al Kooper) and ambitious (multiple styles from r'n'r to reggae are tried on for size) but it lacks the relaxed flow of his '74 *Monkey Grip* debut. **4/10**

Ian Gillan Band

Live At The Budokan DEMON

Looking for the good time lumpen pop-metal of *New Orleans*? Look away now. This is the full jazz-rocking late seventies Gillan Band, and while you get a fistful of Purples reinterpreted on the second orange vinyl of the two, *Clear Air Turbulence* is not for the faint of heart. **5/10**

Blondie

No Exit (Expanded) BMG

Can it really be 25 years since Blondie came back with *Maria*? Which is the central cracker on this deluxe 2 LP/CD new remastered, remixes-boosted expansion. And while it's great they can (sort of) do rap and ska (God bless Clem) you sometimes wish they wouldn't.

6/10

The Doors

Immersed 1967-1971 RHINO.COM

"With Atmos, having loudspeakers on the ceiling allows *Riders On The Storm* to come alive with rain and thunder" says Doors' engineer Bruce Botnick, and if this is the sort of thing you want to spent $80 on, then you have my blessing. All studio LPs in a 6-BluRay set. **7/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

Last Rites

Ozzy Osbourne *LITTLE, BROWN*

The final words of John Michael Osbourne.

The outpouring of love that faced Ozzy Osbourne, and Black Sabbath, as they took to the stage for the very last time at Villa Park in July was unprecedented. It was like the Freddie Mercury Memorial Concert if Freddie Mercury had lived to offer a final valedictory *We Are The Champions*. Ozzy had effectively attended his own wake. And who'd really begrudge him one last communion with, and farewell to, his beloved fans? For while Ozzy Osbourne was everybody's favourite Prince Of Darkness – not just heavy metal's godfather, but also its loveable dear old dad – he was once vilified with similar enthusiasm to the Grundy-era Pistols. The rock 'intelligentsia' hated Sabbath in the early seventies. They were pounded with damning reviews by the music press, radio wouldn't touch them. And TV? No chance.

They didn't play enough chords, Ozzy didn't sing properly, they were working-class Brummies and what made it worse was that audiences loved them. Because many of them were them. And still are. Ozzy only mentions Sabbath's early blanket dismissal in passing in *Last Rites*, he doesn't harp on about it. Which he could. (Sabbath would have been a huge glam-adjacent singles band if the Radio 1/*TOTP* establishment had offered an ounce of support. Even Peel hated them. But Ozzy's not bitter here. It's not in his nature. Another reason the entire world ended up loving him. If anything, this second volume of memoirs (after 2009's excellent *I Am Ozzy*) captures Ozzy in reflective mood. Facing a long series of debilitating conditions (always exacerbated by ongoing Parkinson's) that just keep getting worse despite gruelling procedures and arduous therapy, he recalls his youth, and finds much to be thankful for, (family is absolutely key, always has been), but doesn't shy away from the bad times (the loss of Randy Rhoads nags painfully away) and the depths of the multiple addictions that he ultimately defeated with the help of Sharon, clearly the love of his life. Despite surgeries, persistent bouts of pneumonia, sepsis, you name it, Ozzy is always funny ("I felt like I'd been shat up a wall") and finally, post-Villa Park, recognises that all he was ever looking for at the bottom of all those glasses and in every single coke-lined mirror was the same high he invariably got from performing for his beloved fans.

Moving, hysterical, utterly essential.

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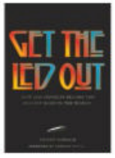
Ian Fortnam

Get The Led Out: How Led Zeppelin Became The Biggest Band In The World

Danny Somach *UNION SQUARE*

In through the out door.



The first half of this biography is the same as all the others: a turgid list of gigs, reschedules and release dates. No musical analysis, no insight into one of the greatest bands in the world that might help explain it. And no inkling of what brought it all crashing down in 1977 in Frisco.

And then, as 1979 dawns, the book perks up. As the promoter of the Knebworth Festival, Freddie Bannister, tries and fails to come up with a supporting line-up that does justice to Zeppelin's reputation. It becomes clear that it's Zeppelin's own intimidating presence in the music business that is responsible.

That's followed by a series of interviews with cameo players and musicians who knew Zep, starting with a 2009 interview with road manager Richard Cole who died in 2021. The main source for the infamous *Hammer Of The Gods*. Now clean, he doesn't have much to add, but he doesn't deny much either.

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Hugh Fielder

The Drums

Mike Joyce *NEW MODERN*

Smiths engine room proves earthy raconteur.

With Morrissey excommunicated – and bassist Andy Rourke two years gone – it usually falls to Johnny Marr to speak for The Smiths. On the evidence of *The Drums*, we should be asking the man at the back. Where Moz's memoir was high-minded, Mike Joyce's take is candid and piss-takey, telling it straight on the band's eighties staging posts with all the rat-a-tat directness of his fills.

There's his Smiths audition, before which he takes magic mushrooms for luck. There's the breakthrough on *Top Of The Pops*, the drummer observing the banality of showbiz right down to Morrissey comparing hairspray brands with Samantha Fox. There are the top-of-the-world years (watching Mick Jagger shimmy in the wings, the drummer realises: "I'm making him dance. I had this power over him. Dance, Jagger, dance"). Then there's the comedown, as Rourke's heroin habit spirals ("He was slurring his words, missing notes…").

But the drummer is insightful too, skewering misconceptions from The Smiths' supposed miserabilism ("I thought we were funny as fuck") to their reputation for an indie-schmindie jangle ("They're not listening close enough – we could really groove").

Joyce notes that the question he's most often asked is: "What's Morrissey really like?" Certainly, we get a sharp portrait of the young frontman: a celibate, vegetarian intellectual, sat up front eating an apple while the band flood the van with cannabis smoke. But Joyce wraps up with the '87 split and doesn't touch the singer's current pariah status, giving this excellent book a slightly incomplete feel.

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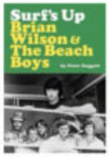
Henry Yates

Surf's Up: Brian Wilson & The Beach Boys

Peter Doggett *NEW MODERN*

Another Beach Boys biography. Not like the others.



A Beach Boys biography as lazily titled as *Surf's Up* hardly promises much. More wearyingly still, in his introduction, former *Record Collector* editor Peter Doggett threatens it will be "a collage of different perspectives, following individual strands of their career to their necessary conclusions". In fact, it's a smorgasbord of magical wonder.

Doggett sold himself short. Taking its cue from Craig Brown's wonderful Beatles biog *One, Two, Three, Four*, it's dozens of loosely chronological chapters which indeed "follow individual strands" until Brian Wilson's death.

Doggett may be a Beach Boys encyclopaedia, but he's witty too, whether noting "Dennis's preference for downing his calories in alcoholic form" in the eating habits chapter or detailing a late-night police chase of Mike Love through Hollywood. At 5mph. And that's even before the chapter sub-titled *Mike Love's Best Ideas*, including the Kokomojito drink.

Those individual strands follow seemingly everything

ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

from Love's extended family (brother Stan on Dennis Wilson: "I have never met a bigger piece of shit") to Eugene Landy and a perceptive rehabilitation of *Sunflower*. Each snippet is a gem of knowledgeable delight.

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John Aizlewood

Should've Been There

Barrie Wentzell *RUFUS*

Scene through a lens.

"I became a photographer to avoid having a proper job," says Barrie Wentzell, describing too modestly his career path from art school ("a holding pen for lost postwar youth") to *Melody Maker*'s chief lensman from 1965 to 1975. Inspired by the Rolling Stones and then the even fiercer Pretty Things to start shooting musicians, a portrait of Diana Ross gave him his first front cover.

This is much more than a collection of rock'n'roll photography. Across nearly 400 exquisite pages, from smokey pubs and clubs, CND marches, festival stages and pop TV shows, it chronicles the post-war youth revolution. As well as a wealth of fantastic images, Barrie's own recollections are equally to be treasured. He notes how, over the decade, fame and money changed the scene creating a barrier between musicians and audience, including the press.

Far too many amazing pictures to list, but a mention must go to a truly spectacular shot of Ritchie Blackmore, strobe-lit into triplicate.

Pete Townshend and Jimmy Page head the roll-call of introductions, indicating their high esteem for the author. If you were there or just wish you were, thank Barrie Wentzell and his camera for capturing the life-changing magic of rock'n'roll.

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Claudia Elliott

Tom Petty: The Life In Music

Gillian G Gaar *MOTORBOOKS*

Never backed down.

Some Brits contend that Tom Petty never showed enough gratitude when their enthusiasm helped him blow Nils Lofgren offstage (and trampoline) every night on their 1977 UK tour. But really, that was just giving him a break, not paying his bills. America made him a star.

He fought for it, doggedly. He was sued by MCA after they'd taken over his distribution "without consent" and was then sued by his label for failing to deliver his new album. He threatened bankruptcy, a risky move that could have left him "untouchable" in the business, but he held out. And *Damn The Torpedoes* was his real breakthrough. A year later he was back in court with MCA over their $1 "superstar pricing" and threatening to call his new album $8.98. He won that too.

He wasn't always worldly wise. He rocked up at Philadelphia Live Aid without a clue what it was about. But two months later he was at Farm Aid as Bob Dylan's backing band, beginning a lifelong friendship that would include supergroup the Traveling Wilburys.

He died in 2017 a week after his 40th anniversary tour from an (almost certainly) accidental overdose of painkillers. He had played the five-month tour with an undiagnosed broken hip.

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Hugh Fielder

Live Aid: The Definitive 40-Year Story

Paul Vallely *NEW MODERN*

Did it really happen? Yes it did.

Forty years on, it's clear that Live Aid didn't change the world. Yet, as Paul Vallely – Ethiopia correspondent for *The Times* at the time of Band Aid – notes, "Live Aid did not just capture the zeitgeist. It created it".

Vallely tells the sometimes moving, sometimes hilarious, but always driven tale of Band Aid, Live Aid and Live 8 chiefly through Geldof's eyes, whether he's calling Ethiopia's strongman President Mengistu a "murdering c**t" or meeting Bob Dylan: "like talking to a man in a pub," he claims improbably.

For all that Geldof was a force of nature prepared to propel the cause by any means necessary, Live Aid still found Keith Richards playing with Dylan chiefly to be on the US bill above Mick Jagger's guest slot with Tina Turner. And there's a cameo by current Pope, Leo XIV, which almost beggars belief.

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John Aizlewood

If Only You Knew

Lulu *HODDER & STOUGHTON*

Shout to the top.

It starts as a familiar rags-to-riches tale of Marie Lawrie, the bubbly Glaswegian schoolgirl with the huge voice, renamed Lulu by a canny showbiz manager and whisked to London for pop stardom.

Lulu makes a ton of money from her TV show and music so that she can forget her family background. Her father Eddie was an alcoholic, badly beating her mother Betty on many occasions as young Marie tried to protect her siblings.

Lulu comes from a generation where women – particularly those from a working-class background – did as they were told – a belief held even through the supposedly counter-cultural sixties. Inevitably, the turmoil of her early years outruns her in later life and she has to battle her own drink problem. But she turns it around with hard work. Not so much a fairytale ending, but a hopeful one.

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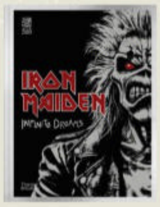
Claudia Elliott



Infinite Dreams:

The Official Visual History

Iron Maiden *THAMES & HUDSON*

Images and words that define half a century's worth of 'eavy metal.

From earliest pub gigs enhanced by DIY props (who can forget that the first Eddie The 'Ead mascot spat blood thanks to a repurposed fish tank pump?!) and a plucky self-financed demo-turned debut EP (*The Soundhouse Tapes*) to the indescribably detailed art that wrapped itself around the *Somewhere In Time* and *Powerslave* albums, also stubborn insistence upon playing their then-latest record (*A Matter Of Life And Death*) *in its entirety*, Iron Maiden have always thought big.

Commemorating the group's fiftieth anniversary, these 352 pages are largely pictorially based, revealing many unseen images from the band's personal archives. Frankly, they are magnificent. Dog-eared shots of early line-ups rescued from scrapbooks are juxtaposed with latter-day Champions League exploits as Maiden climb the hill from the pubs of London's East End to travel the globe on their own flying tour bus, Ed Force One, piloted by lead singer Bruce Dickinson. The phrase 'boy's own' doesn't even begin to cover it.

Infinite Dreams is a treasure trove of backstage passes, gig flyers, record sleeves, hand-written lyrics, press cuttings, tour dates, technical info, stage props and outfits and succinct yet punchy interviews with those who were there to see it all. The line-up changes – Paul Di'Anno, Blaze Bayley and Nicko McBrain out, and the ins and outs and ins again of Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith – are handled sensitively and candidly.

Though used sparingly when compared to the avalanche of existing books on Maiden, words are deployed to carry optimum impact. In his foreword, bassist Steve Harris overturns the "discrepancy" that he formed the group on Christmas Day of 1975 when in fact they had been around since August. Dickinson contributes a 'backword' of his own, assuring us that "the tale will go on… and on".

In a fantastic anecdote intended to explain an inherited streak of obstinacy, Steve recalls rehearsing with his pre-Maiden outfit Smiler at the house of his beloved nan, and the complaints received from a neighbour. Hopping mad, the pocket rocket of a pensioner ("she was four-foot eleven and just fiery") stormed next door ("the swearing was unbelievable"). Upon her return, the members of Smiler were duly commanded: "Right, start playing. And turn it up."

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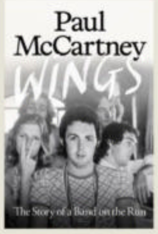
Dave Ling

PRESS

Wings: The Story Of A Band On The Run



Paul McCartney (Edited by Ted Widmer)

ALLEN LANE/PENGUIN

The story of the 70s post-Beatles project as told by the band and those close to them.

Drawing on, among other sources, hours of interviews conducted by Morgan Neville for his documentary *Man On The Run*, this copious volume is the fullest yet account of the long under-regarded Wings. Back then they enjoyed great success, though suffered critically, not least because the Fab Four were so greatly missed. Wings' supposed status as a pale successor was affirmed by Alan Partridge's patronage ("only the band The Beatles could have been!"). But today it's understood that Wings and McCartney were treated harshly in their day by critics, and this book is a major part of their just reappraisal.

Inevitably, the shadow of The Beatles hung over Wings right through until Lennon's murder extinguished the possibility of any longed-for reunion, that might make the world feel whole again. McCartney, however, was determined to make a radical departure from The Beatles way of doing things, deliberately avoiding the comfort zone they might have afforded. Hence, his earliest solo recordings were deliberately lo-fi, eschewing the studio luxuries of Abbey Road. He seemed to enjoy the privations of living on a Scottish farm, amid the acrimony of The Beatles' break-up. With wife Linda and Denny Laine alongside, he sought to carry out the romantic rock notion of getting back to playing clubs and small venues – they did so on their University tour. They toured Europe in a psychedelic open-top bus, stayed in terrible hotels, had a trench mentality in the face of critical brickbats, and recorded *Band On The Run* in a ramshackle Lagos studio, where they endured monsoons and a mugging.

Wings revolved around the nucleus of Denny Laine, Paul and Linda. It's quite clear from her own, touchingly re-heard voice and others here that she was crucial to Wings, as an emotional ally to Paul, her importance way above and beyond musical accompaniment – not that ridicule did not get to her.

Inevitably, thanks to McCartney's preexisting stardom and ongoing talent, Wings did become huge. They split at the right time, however, just as rock went corporate, inimical to Wings' early adventurism.

This book features a staggering range of voices – Lennon and his son Sean Ono, particularly perceptive, as well as ex-players, and even kind words from Steve Jobs and HM Queen. It's studded with details, anecdotes. A prodigious, worthy effort.

■■■■■■■■□□

David Stubbs

Turn My Head Into Sound: A History Of Kevin Shields And My Bloody Valentine

Andrew Perer JAWBONE PRESS

First biog of shoegaze noise supremo – and his band.

turn
my
head
into
sound
Andrew Perer

It's hard to find a major artist or act in popular music who hasn't had their story told in book form, but, surprisingly, Kevin Shields and My Bloody Valentine come under that category. Andrew Perer plugs that hole and he offers illuminating insights such as the importance of the London squatting scene and dole culture on MBV's development, not to mention seldom-mentioned influences such as hip-hop. He also delves into Shields' sonic adventures in some detail and picks the bones out of several contradictory versions of how the sound of classic albums such as *Isn't Anything* and *Loveless* took shape, partly demythologising the processes involved. Perhaps inevitably, he doesn't benefit from direct access to talk to the main players, but he does a sterling research job of colouring in the bigger picture via those who worked with the band, and archive interview quotes. Thus he brings a singularly hazy brand of music into HD focus.

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Johnny Sharp

Omar And Cedric: If This Ever Gets Weird

Dir: Nicolas Jack Davies

At The Drive-In and The Mars Volta men documentary.

Assembled using footage Omar Rodríguez-López began shooting when he was just seven years old, the extraordinary *Omar And Cedric: If This Ever Gets Weird* tells the story of At The Drive-In and The Mars Volta, but it's much more about the guitarist's long relationship with frontman Cedric Bixler-Savala.

The film is trippy and frequently abstract (fans of Adam Curtis will feel right at home) and deeply personal, from the footage of Rodríguez-López's mother in a coma to the moment he stands alone, breaking down, at the side of a stage in Holland. It's a film about racism, homophobia, death, addiction, sobriety, Scientology, betrayal, love, friendship, and the utter misery of success. But it's also about music, with the rapid-fire editing pausing just once, as previously unseen 16mm film of The Mars Volta playing Brixton in 2005 shows what an electrifying, unique live act they were.

■■■■■■■■□□

Fraser Lewry

A Trip To Australia With Paul Di'Anno

Chris Dale AMAZON

Iron Maiden's former singer makes a final trip down under.

PAUL DI'ANNO

Last summer, Chris Dale accepted an invitation to accompany Paul Di'Anno on a five-date tour of Australia. The former Atom Seed and Bruce Dickinson bassist did so thanks to a longtime friendship with Iron Maiden's former singer and a personal motto of never refusing an adventure.

Di'Anno was nine months away from dying, smoking like a chimney, addicted to fast food and on the hunt for a line of "devil's dandruff" whenever available. Although playing on the goodwill that accompanies being wheelchair-bound, the book's subject retained a lifelong ability to start an argument in an empty room, and Dale's words are a travelogue of human faeces, wet wipes and temper tantrums – some situations amusing, others extremely sad.

Di'Anno "played the rock star card" until the very end, the author maintains, adding: "Paul knew he wasn't long for this world, and he wanted to go out with a blaze".

Mission accomplished.

■■■■■■■□□□

Dave Ling

Long Way Home: The Frankie Miller Story

Davy Arthur

NEW HAVEN PUBLISHING

Life and times of the Celtic soul survivor.

LONG WAY HOME
FRANKIE
MILLER

In common with fellow sixties 'shouters' Rod Stewart and Terry Reid, Glasgow's Frankie Miller based his style on Otis Redding. Not only blessed with a powerful voice, Miller is also a talented songwriter, whose material was covered by many artists including Ray Charles

PRESS

and Bob Seger. *After All (I Live My Life)*, from his 1972 debut *Once In A Blue Moon*, is one of the best songs written by anyone, anywhere, and more representative than his 1978 chart hit *Darlin'*, which he didn't write. He also put in a memorably chilling performance as Jake McQuillan, Greenock razor gang leader, in the 1979 TV play *Just A Boy's Game*. A bleed on the brain in New York in 1994 left him unconscious for five months and ended his career, but he survived, with the support of his partner Annette.

Part fan memoir, part collectors' guide, this is an in-depth compilation of album and gig reviews, scores of photos and contributions from the many musicians who worked with Miller. About as 'full house' as any fan could want and a valuable, heartfelt testament to the life and work of a widely respected and influential artist.

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Claudia Elliott

Def Leppard

Diamond Star Heroes: Live From Sheffield

MERCURY STUDIOS

Sheffield, Sheffield, Sheffield, Sheffield's rocked!

As far as legendary homecomings go, Def Leppard played a blinder in 2023, when the Sheffield sons effectively took over the city for a long, late-spring weekend in May. *Diamond Star Heroes* documents the lot. First up was a rare, brilliantly intimate gig for hundreds of fans at the famous, and now sadly closed, Leadmill nightclub – this only comes with the 4K Ultra HD version, not CD, vinyl or Blu-ray. Three days later came a mega concert at Bramall Lane, the home of Sheffield United, and this set's main feature. Drone footage of the Steel City skyline leads us into the stadium as the Leps launch into recent anthem *Take What You Want*. It's an epic opening that's sustained for the next 90 minutes. If the previous performance was the band revisiting their NWOBHM days, this is a world-class showcase for their embarrassment of hard-rock hits. *Let's Get Rocked, Animal, Love Bites, Hysteria*; they're all here and sounding better than ever. DSH is shot in a way that represents the show's scale, while also retaining a close-up, communal feel among the generations in attendance. "From Portland Works to Bramall Lane, 47 years... Sheffield will always be Def Leppard land!" Joe Elliott declares after *Photograph*, the band taking their final bows. They're due back in town next year for another sell-out hometown shindig, and you'll struggle to find anyone present who thinks otherwise.

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Chris Lord

Jean-Michel Jarre

Live In Bratislava SONY

Brian May blasts JMJ into space at Slovakian sci-fi synth-rock spectacular.

Affirming his reputation as rock's most unlikely astrophysicist, Brian May joined Jean-Michel Jarre on stage last year at a free public concert to promote the science-themed Starmus festival in Slovakia. Originally a TV broadcast, this repackaged video and audio album works much better as a full cinematic experience. Featuring a towering sci-fi cityscape stage, dazzling video graphics, weapons-grade pyrotechnics and 400 drones dancing in the night sky, Jarre's maximalist performance proves the 77-year-old Peter Pan of Euro-tronica remains a genius at high-tech spectacle, even if his music slips too easily into anodyne synth rock. Arriving midway through, May boosts energy levels considerably on a lavish orchestral version of Jarre's *Deuxième Rendez-Vous*, which features the Queen guitar wizard in turbo-shredding mode alongside the massed brass of the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra and its associated choir. Similarly understated is the duo's supercharged excerpt from Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, here reborn as a flame-grilled glam classical blockbuster. May also cranks out a handful of gloriously indulgent solos before returning for the encore, rebooting Jarre's *Time Machine* with bendy lasers and cinematic pyrotechnics. In such moments, Jarre's mildly embarrassing effort at remaining agelessly cool and musically current give way to something much more preposterously entertaining, two old masters of 70s prog going full mad rocket scientist.

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Stephen Dalton

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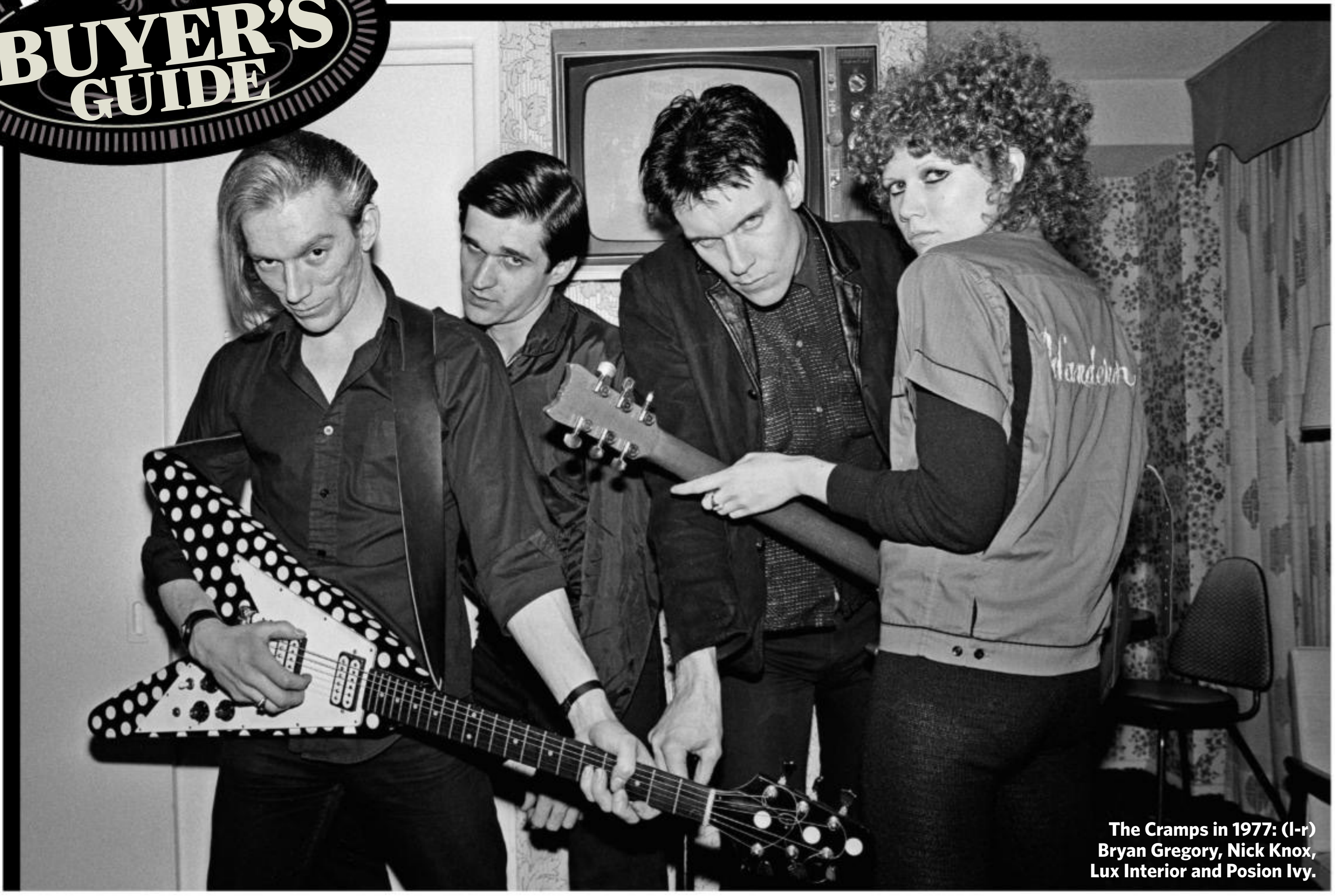


The Cramps in 1977: (l-r) Bryan Gregory, Nick Knox, Lux Interior and Posion Ivy.

The Cramps

Celebrating the finest in American trash and kitsch culture, The Cramps played rock'n'roll at its delinquent, B-movie best.

Right from their formation in 1976, The Cramps were a living, breathing organism dedicated to evangelising rock'n'roll at its most primal, celebrating colourful sexual practices and altered states of mind, and devouring horror movies, sci-fi films, TV, comic books and the very finest in American trash and kitsch culture. Crucially, they were no mere revivalists. The Cramps were fundamentalists and the gang that the most unruly of delinquents wanted to join.

Led by singer Lux Interior and guitarist Poison Ivy Rorschach, the pair met in 1972 when the former picked up the latter as a hitchhiker in Sacramento, California, fell in love and remained married until Interior's untimely passing in 2009 at the age of 62. In between those two points, the pair – along with a supporting cast of ever-changing members, which included ghoulish guitarist Bryan Gregory and later, Kid Congo Powers, and drummer Nick Knox among many others – created one of the most breathlessly exciting bands to have emerged from CBGBs' primordial swamp in New York.

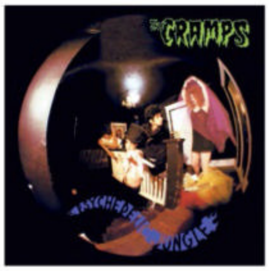
Initially eschewing the bass guitar in favour of a fuzz-heavy dual guitar attack (committing themselves to the feral and minimal delivery of their fifties and sixties forebears), The Cramps inadvertently invented psychobilly, though none of their disciples ever quite matched their zeal. Their covers of rock'n'roll and garage curios had less to do with a lack of ideas and more with an archaeological approach to what had come before them. Even when they did finally succumb to the low end, they remained number one in a field of one. And while their recorded quality control dipped from time to time, The Cramps remained one the most dependably thrilling live bands to hit the boards right until the end.

Even so, their legacy lives on. Though their music has been used in numerous films (most appropriately, *Surfin' Dead* in 1985 horror/comedy *The Return Of The Living Dead)* and TV shows (their guest appearance in *Beverly Hills 90210* in 1994 still feels like a home invasion) it's entirely apposite that their music was exhumed from beyond the grave to reach a whole new generation of fans when Jenna Ortega danced to *Goo Goo Muck* as the titular Wednesday in director Tim Burton's goth-tinged Netflix series.

Plenty of bands talk the talk, but very few can actually walk the walk. That The Cramps took those strides in the highest of heels and shiniest of boots simply makes them so much more alluring.

Julian Marszalek

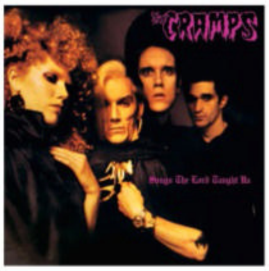
Essential Classics



Psychedelic Jungle

IRS, 1981

Following Bryan Gregory's sudden departure, The Cramps recruited The Gun Club's Kid Congo Powers and seized the production reins to deliver their masterpiece. The combination of half covers (The Novas' *The Crusher* is a highlight) and half Rorschach-Interior originals (experience the bad trip that is *Can't Find My Mind*) are united by a sound that's drenched in reverb and propelled by Nick Knox's slapbacked drums. Poison Ivy's twanging leads and licks balance against Power's fuzzed emanations while Lux Interior delivers some of the band's funniest lyrics with the straightest of faces.



Songs The Lord Taught Us

ILLEGAL, 1980

The Cramps' debut remains an astonishing calling card that's as much a history lesson as it is an affirmation of rock'n'roll at its most elemental. Recorded in Memphis under the aegis of Big Star's Alex Chilton, The Cramps' seamless fusion of garage rock, psychedelia and rockabilly with horror and sci-fi b-movies is matched by an uncanny alchemy where cover versions sound like originals and vice-versa. Almost savant in approach, Bryan Gregory's frenzied guitar solo during *Garbageman* could never have been created by a virtuoso, while the imagery of using "your eyeballs for dials" during *TV Set* is both unsettling and hilarious.

PETER NOBLE/REDFERNS

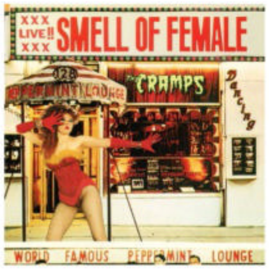
Superior Reputation cementing

The Cramps
Off The Bone

...Off The Bone

ILLEGAL, 1983

Released without The Cramps' consent amid a royalty dispute with Illegal/IRS which prevented new material seeing the light of day, *...Off The Bone* mopped up the band's *Gravest Hits* EP (including the agenda setting *Human Fly*) as well as their singles and b-sides to date. But what angered The Cramps satiated the appetites of fans whose demand for new material turned them into one of the most bootlegged bands of the era. Little wonder that *...Off The Bone*, housed in a cover adorned with an anaglyph that required 3-D specs, spent a staggering 71 weeks in the UK independent album charts.



Smell Of Female

BIG BEAT, 1983

Amid the flood of live bootlegs during that early eighties recording hiatus, The Cramps released their official live EP. Recorded over two nights in February 1983 at New York's celebrated Peppermint Lounge – reportedly the home of sixties dance craze The Twist – six new tracks were pulled and released as an EP with a running time of less than 20 minutes. And yet that proved ample time for The Cramps to come roaring back with uncut gems *You Got Good Taste* and *Thee Most Exalted Potentate Of Love* with drummer Nick Knox displaying his worth on an unhinged reading of The Count Five's *Psychotic Reaction*.

The Cramps
STAY SICK!

Stay Sick!

ENIGMA, 1990

With the bubble-gum chewing Candy del Mar on bass, The Cramps hadn't sounded this organic since Kid Congo Powers' tenure. Locking in with Nick Knox, the rhythm section swung more freely than King Kong's knackers in a hurricane and so freed up Poison Ivy to deliver some of her most savage fret-worrying excursions as Lux Interior's ongoing observations on sex (*Daisies Up Your Butterfly*), drugs (*Bop Pills*) and rock'n'roll (er, *God Damn Rock'n'Roll*) remained as deliciously deviant as ever. Amazingly, they even scored a bona fide UK Top 40 hit with the rollicking *Bikini Girls With Machine Guns*.

A Date with Elvis

A Date With Elvis

BIG BEAT, 1986

Recorded as a trio by Lux Interior, Poison Ivy and Nick Knox, The Cramps' third studio album dropped the double guitar onslaught with the introduction of the bass. Also dialled back was the preoccupation with schlock-horror, as evidenced by the likes of *Can Your Pussy Do The Dog?*, *The Hot Pearl Snatch* and *What's Inside A Girl?* (answer: *'There's a whole 'nother world'.*), was replaced with a hilariously lascivious focus on sex. Well-chosen covers The Spark Plugs' garage obscurity *Chicken* and Charlie Feathers' intoxicated lament *It's Just That Song* also add up to its crazed charms.

Good Worth exploring

BIG BEAT
CRAMPS
FROM
BADSVILLE

Big Beat From Badsville

EPITAPH, 1998

Their first album to be made up entirely of Rorschach-Interior originals, *Big Beat From Badsville* goes some distance to restoring The Cramps' former glories. With the rhythm section of bassist Slim Chance and drummer Harry Drumdini fully bedded in, the band plays with a consistent vigour and sense of purpose that had been missing since *Stay Sick!* Poison Ivy is ferocious throughout – *It Thing Hard On* is a speaker-serrating joy and *Cramp Stomp*'s fuzz-riffing affirms her skills. Lux's fascination with S&M raises a knowing laugh with *Queen Of Pain*'s observation that "those marks will be hard to explain."

CRAMPS
Flamejob

Flame Job

CREATION, 1994

Newly signed to Alan McGee's Creation label in the UK and with Harry Drumdini making his drumming debut, The Cramps began to atone for the sins of its predecessor with this collection of dead-on rock'n'roll. Though *Let's Get Customized*, *Mean Machine* and *Sado County Auto Show* suggest – perish the thought! – a concept album, the second half's reliance on covers finds the band sputtering to a close with Freddie And The Hitchhikers' *Sinners*, which they'd been covering since their early days, and a *Route 66 (Get Your Kicks On)* that feels more like a gentle pootle through a low-traffic neighbourhood than crazed joyriding.

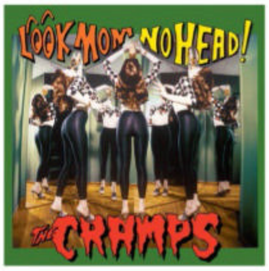
The CRAMPS
FIENDS OF DOPE ISLAND

Fiends Of Dope Island

VENGEANCE, 2003

Still pursuing their singular path of middle-aged delinquency, prurient interests and rock'n'roll as the only music to offer any kind of salvation, this record could only have been made by The Cramps. Alas, for all of its crunching riffs (*Big Black Witchcraft Rock*), rockabilly rhythms (*Papa Satan Sang Louie*) and Poison Ivy's muscular production, The Cramps' songwriting wit dried up with the likes of *Dr Fucker M.D. (Musical Deviant)* and *Elvis Fucking Christ* picking very low-hanging fruit. It rocks hard, for sure, with Poison Ivy on top of her guitar playing and production duties, but this isn't for the novice.

Avoid



Look Mom No Head!

BIG BEAT, 1991

It can surely be no coincidence that the loss of both bassist Candy del Mar and longtime drummer Nick Knox resulted in this pedestrian and by-the-numbers effort. For the first time in their entire career, The Cramps proved to be a disappointment – on this, their fifth studio album – thanks to sub-par songwriting that included the groan-inducing *Two Headed Sex Change* and *I Wanna Get In Your Pants* among others. Not even the presence of Iggy Pop on a cover of The Flower Children's *Miniskirt Blues* can save this dud from the dumpster, but at least there's one classic in the shape of the frantic *Dames, Booze, Chains And Boots*.

Essential Playlist

Thee Most Exalted Potentate Of Love
Smell Of Female

Garbageman
Songs The Lord Taught Us

Human Fly
...Off The Bone

Surfin' Bird
...Off The Bone

The Natives Are Restless
Psychedelic Jungle

Can Your Pussy Do The Dog?
A Date With Elvis

Bop Pills
Stay Sick!

Sado County Auto Show
Flame Job

The Crusher
Psychedelic Jungle

Sunglasses After Dark
Songs The Lord Taught Us

Chicken
A Date With Elvis

I Ain't Nuthin' But A Gorehound
Smell Of Female

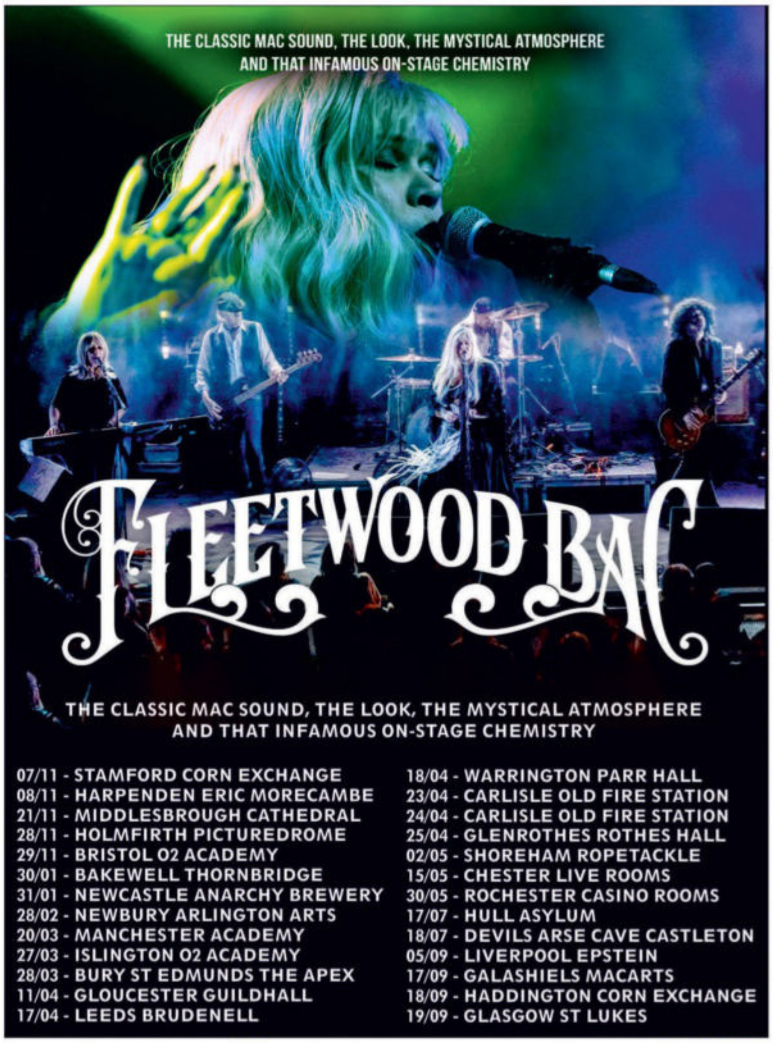
Goo Goo Muck
Psychedelic Jungle

New Kind Of Kick
...Off The Bone

You Got Good Taste
Smell Of Female

What's Inside A Girl?
A Date With Elvis

Bikini Girls...
Stay Sick!

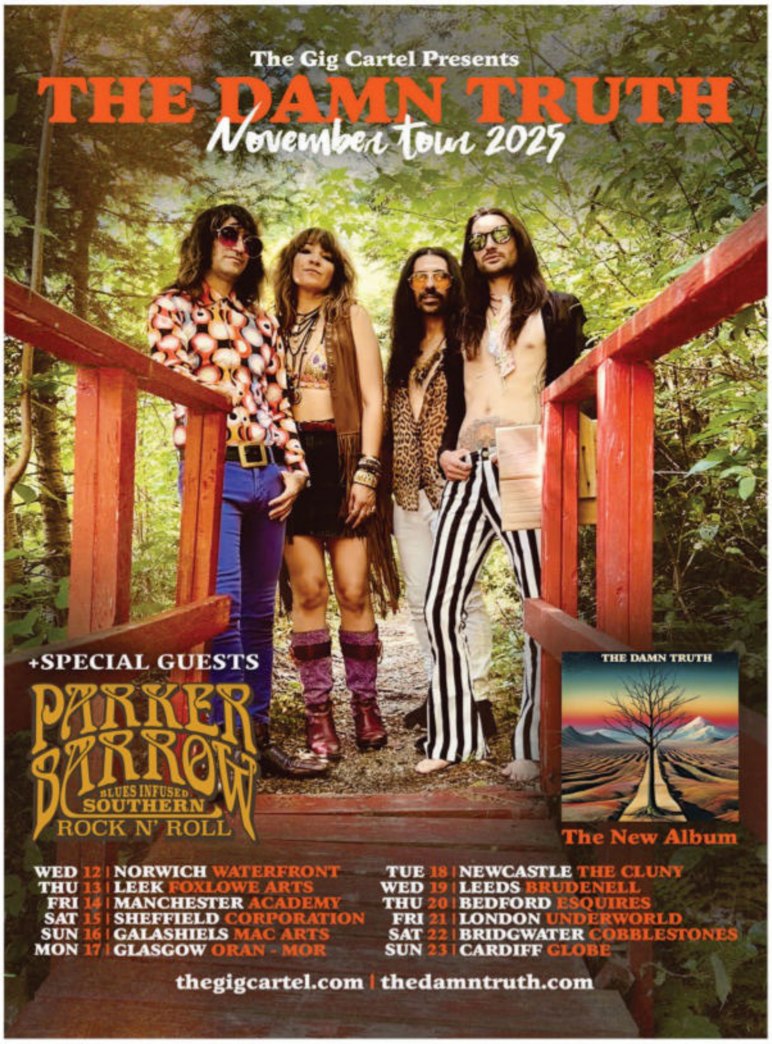


THE CLASSIC MAC SOUND, THE LOOK, THE MYSTICAL ATMOSPHERE
AND THAT INFAMOUS ON-STAGE CHEMISTRY

FLEETWOOD BAC

THE CLASSIC MAC SOUND, THE LOOK, THE MYSTICAL ATMOSPHERE
AND THAT INFAMOUS ON-STAGE CHEMISTRY

07/11 - STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE
08/11 - HARPENDEN ERIC MORECAMBE
21/11 - MIDDLESBROUGH CATHEDRAL
28/11 - HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
29/11 - BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
30/01 - BAKEWELL THORNBRIDGE
31/01 - NEWCASTLE ANARCHY BREWERY
28/02 - NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS
20/03 - MANCHESTER ACADEMY
27/03 - ISLINGTON O2 ACADEMY
28/03 - BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
11/04 - GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
17/04 - LEEDS BRUDENELL
18/04 - WARRINGTON PARR HALL
23/04 - CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION
24/04 - CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION
25/04 - GLENROTHES ROTHES HALL
02/05 - SHOREHAM ROPETACKLE
15/05 - CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
30/05 - ROCHESTER CASINO ROOMS
17/07 - HULL ASYLUM
18/07 - DEVILS ARSE CAVE CASTLETON
05/09 - LIVERPOOL EPSTEIN
17/09 - GALASHIELS MACARTS
18/09 - HADDINGTON CORN EXCHANGE
19/09 - GLASGOW ST LUKES



The Gig Cartel Presents

THE DAMN TRUTH

November tour 2025

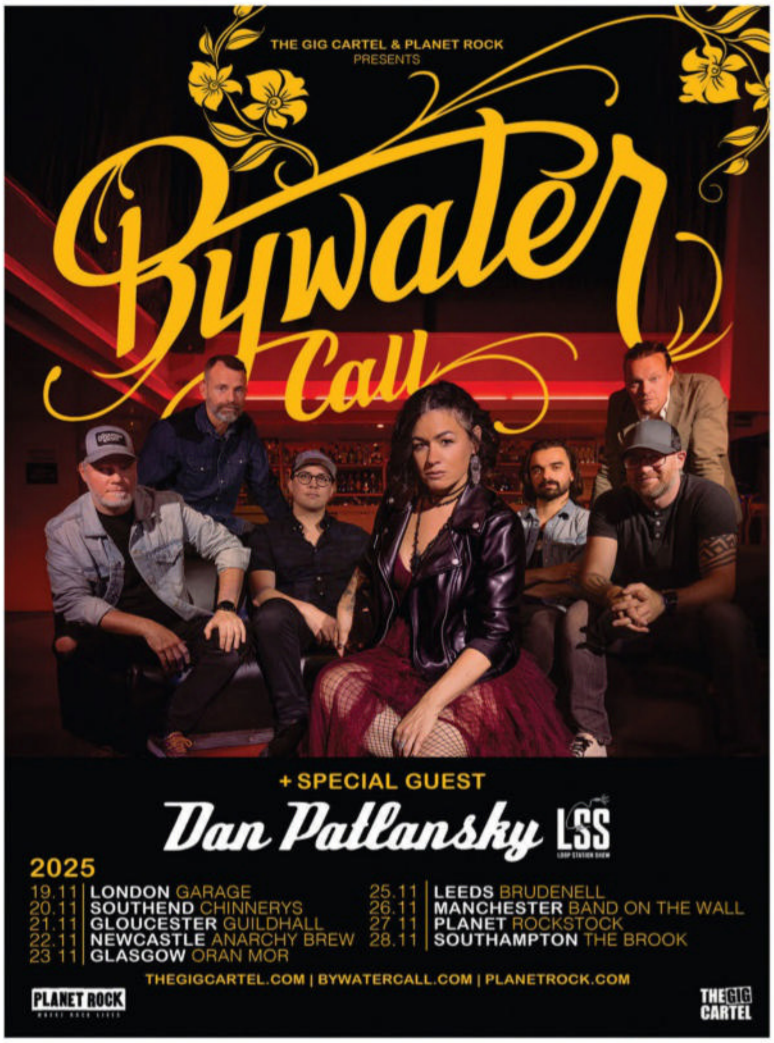
+SPECIAL GUESTS

PARKER BARROW
BLUES INFUSED SOUTHERN
ROCK N' ROLL

The New Album

WED 12 | NORWICH WATERFRONT
THU 13 | LEEK FOXLOWE ARTS
FRI 14 | MANCHESTER ACADEMY
SAT 15 | SHEFFIELD CORPORATION
SUN 16 | GALASHIELS MAC ARTS
MON 17 | GLASGOW ORAN - MOR
TUE 18 | NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY
WED 19 | LEEDS BRUDENELL
THU 20 | BEDFORD ESQUIRES
FRI 21 | LONDON UNDERWORLD
SAT 22 | BRIDGWATER COBBLESTONES
SUN 23 | CARDIFF GLOBE

thegigcartel.com | thedamntruth.com



THE GIG CARTEL & PLANET ROCK
PRESENTS

Bywater Call

+ SPECIAL GUEST

Dan Patlansky LSS
LOOP STATION SHOW

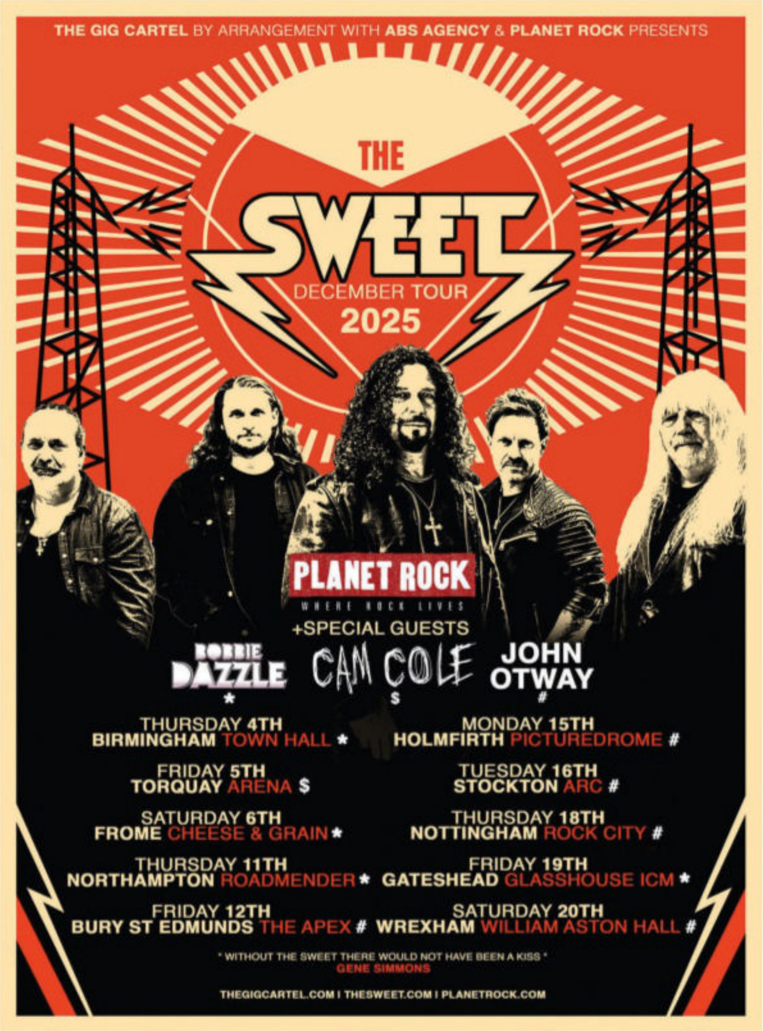
2025

19.11 | LONDON GARAGE
20.11 | SOUTHEND CHINNERYS
21.11 | GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
22.11 | NEWCASTLE ANARCHY BREW
23 11 | GLASGOW ORAN MOR
25.11 | LEEDS BRUDENELL
26.11 | MANCHESTER BAND ON THE WALL
27 11 | PLANET ROCKSTOCK
28.11 | SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK

THEGIGCARTEL.COM | BYWATERCALL.COM | PLANETROCK.COM

PLANET ROCK

THE GIG CARTEL



THE GIG CARTEL BY ARRANGEMENT WITH ABS AGENCY & PLANET ROCK PRESENTS

THE SWEET

DECEMBER TOUR
2025

PLANET ROCK
WHERE ROCK LIVES

+SPECIAL GUESTS

BOBBIE DAZZLE *
CAM COLE $
JOHN OTWAY #

THURSDAY 4TH
BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL *

FRIDAY 5TH
TORQUAY ARENA $

SATURDAY 6TH
FROME CHEESE & GRAIN *

THURSDAY 11TH
NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER *

FRIDAY 12TH
BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX #

MONDAY 15TH
HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME #

TUESDAY 16TH
STOCKTON ARC #

THURSDAY 18TH
NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY #

FRIDAY 19TH
GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE ICM *

SATURDAY 20TH
WREXHAM WILLIAM ASTON HALL #

" WITHOUT THE SWEET THERE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A KISS "
GENE SIMMONS

THEGIGCARTEL.COM I THESWEET.COM I PLANETROCK.COM

LIVE!

THE HIGH-VOLTAGE WHAT'S ON GUIDE

By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

JIM DYSON/GETTY IMAGES

P105

Patti Smith

The art-punk pioneer turns back time triumphantly.

P96 INTERVIEWS
P99 TOUR DATES
P103 LIVE REVIEWS

> “Rod Price and I were determined Foghat would play in England again. But it never happened until now. That makes me very happy.”

Asia ft John Payne & Foghat

With new album *Aviana* en route, Asia ft John Payne play London this month with Foghat too.

John Payne was the lead singer and bassist of Asia from 1991 until the keyboard wizard who hired him, Geoffrey Downes, quit abruptly and without warning for a reunion of the original line-up. Among other projects, Payne went on to lead his own incarnation of Asia. Drummer Roger Earl is the last original member of the blues-based English rockers Foghat. Payne and Earl both live in the US, but with both acts co-headlining a bill in London as part of their own respective tours, we put the pair together on a Zoom call.

Roger, Foghat’s last appearance in the UK was at the Rainbow Theatre in London in 1974 – more than fifty years ago. Why on earth has it taken so long to return?

Earl: Maybe our manager at the time maybe didn’t know what he was doing, but for quite a while we couldn’t work in England because our previous manager had blackballed us. Even if people wanted to book us, they couldn’t.

But surely you *wanted* to come back?

Earl: Of course we did, but we were working so hard in America. It’s something that Rod Price, our guitar player [who died in 2005] and I, were determined to do. But for lots of reasons it never happened. Until now. That makes me very happy.

In these times when people don’t have a lot of money, specially curated double-bills such as this one seem like the way to go.

Payne: They really open a lot of doors that otherwise would be closed, so here in the States we do a lot of them.

Earl: I still remember coming here [America] for the first time in 1969 when I was in Savoy Brown and we did shows at the Fillmore East and West. I love that [promoter] Bill Graham would put us on with someone like BB King. That was very adventurous of him, but it worked.

Are you fans of each other’s music?

Earl: John Payne? Never heard of him! Nah, of course we are.

Payne: I always thought Foghat was a very strange name! But I love their music.

Earl: He’s had some incredible players in his band.

JOHN PAYNE: JAIME SCHULTZ/SHUTTERSTOCK; ROGER EARL: STEPHEN J. COHEN/GETTY IMAGES

Payne: They just don't last very long. Quite recently, we had a guitarist that played just one show.
Earl: I've had six people from this band pass on. It's very sad. But I'm here still playing, it's what you do.

John is referring to It Bites guitarist Francis Dunnery. What happened there?
Payne: Frank told me: 'I'm not a chameleon player', but with our long discography he had to cover Steve Howe, Guthrie Govan and the rest. A bit of improvisation is fine, but in the end it just didn't work out, though we remain great friends. Will he be on the new album [*Aviana*]? It's possible he could be a guest.

For those unaware, John, in a nutshell, how are you allowed to use the Asia name?
Payne: I spent fifteen years with that band, releasing eight albums. I was pretty pissed off when Geoff rejoined Original Asia, but in retrospect I now see it was necessary. I still wanted to carry on doing Asia stuff, and with my share of the name it was agreed that I could. It causes a bit of confusion in the marketplace, but I've a big catalogue of my own Asia material to pull from.

The Asia setlist on this tour has been chosen in part by the fans, right?
Payne: Yeah. And I was pleasantly surprised that so many of them want to hear material from my own years with the band.

In a social media post last summer you addressed the possibility of rejoining Geoff Downes in the 'other' Asia, saying: "My door is always open, but perhaps too much time and misunderstandings" were in the way.
Payne: It's a subject that some people get heated and passionate about.

You handled it delicately.
Payne: Thanks. I see it like a relationship, if your girlfriend doesn't love you anymore there isn't much you can do. I did think I might get asked back when John Wetton died [in 2017], but it wasn't to be. Maybe in the future... who knows?

Roger, are Foghat working on a new album?
Earl: A couple of years back, *Sonic Mojo* took root in the *Billboard* blues chart for 37 weeks, so yeah. We started work on a new one just a couple of weeks ago. At the moment, six or seven songs are in the can and also we've found a bunch of live tracks that might prove useful. It should be out early next year.

After all these decades, what should we expect from a Foghat concert?
Earl: It's only rock'n'roll, but we like it, like it. [He laughs]. We play *Slow Ride, Fool For The City, Stone Blue* and *I Just Wanna Make Love To You*. Scott Holt, our lead singer and lead guitarist, spent ten years playing with Buddy Guy so I don't really need to say anymore. And me? I play drums in a rock'n'roll band. It's what I've done all my life. And I have fun... sometimes too much fun, but I won't go there. **DL**

The Shepherd's Bush Empire show takes place on November 16.

Parker Barrow

Southern blues rock band's UK tour: not to be missed.

Led by the husband-and-wife duo of vocalist Megan Kane and drummer Dylan Turner, Parker Barrow are a high-energy, blues-infused Southern rock'n'roll band from Nashville. Following this summer's first visit to the UK, the six-piece make a speedy return as guests of The Damn Truth.

The band's name tips its Stetson to the US outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. Does that sometimes cause confusion?
Dylan Turner: It definitely inspires quizzical looks. After the explanation, we make a point of saying that we're not running from the law, we're running *towards something*. We do feel connected to Bonnie & Clyde, but our own pursuits are much different.

Your debut jaunt to Europe included three UK shows, notably a spot on the main stage at Maid Of Stone. Though the fans enjoyed it the weather gods were a little less kind.
Megan Kane: Right. We had wind and rain.
Turner: I felt sorry for a guy in the front row. Every five minutes, the water on the top of the stage would dump itself right on him.
Kane: The weather had been so nice during the rest of the time, so it was only right that we would experience a good old English shower. It felt kinda cool.

How did the two of you meet?
Turner: I grew up in Maryland and Megan is from Alabama, 800 miles apart. We were lucky enough to be in Nashville at the same time and happened to meet at a bar. The rest is history. Two weeks later she came out on the road with my band and there was an instant connection, musically and personally.
Kane: After travelling across the country in a van together for a hundred days, we knew there was foundation for a relationship.

Can it sometimes be demanding to be a husband and wife together in a band?
Turner: Not really. In seven years together, we've probably spent less than seven days apart and we have no problem with that.
Kane: I'm thankful we get to do this together.

Megan, reviewers have described your vocal style as "part Warren Haynes, part Tina Turner" along with what's been termed "a Daisy Duke-style charm."
Kane: Awww. I'm not great at receiving compliments, but I'm so grateful we've gotten so many great reviews. It's nice to know that we're not doing a horrible job!

The band sometimes covers *My Morning Song* by The Black Crowes in their set. Which other non-originals have you played?
Kane: We enjoy playing deep cuts by other artists. We've covered some Blind Faith, some Allman Brothers and Zeppelin...
Turner: ...Some Rolling Stones.
Kane: We like playing homage to songs that we grew up listening to.

How will your second album compare to the 2023 debut, *Jukebox Gypsies*?
Turner: With our guitar player Alex Bender taking on a larger role in the band, we've undergone a big progression. There's an evolution to what we're doing, which you'll hear early next year.

Are you friends with The Damn Truth?
Kane: We're big fans of theirs, and we've admired the progression that they have made. We can't wait to meet them, I believe our two bands together will be a match made in heaven. **DL**

The trek wraps in Cardiff on November 23.

"There isn't anything I would change. We brought pleasure to millions. I'm an entertainer and I never want to give that up."

Dave Hill's Slade

Cum on, there's still time to feel the noize…

You don't so much interview Dave Hill as set the recording device and let him talk. Here, in a lively Zoom call, Slade's guitarist previews a ten-date farewell tour that isn't a farewell tour after all.

This December run marks the end of long bouts of touring for you – but it isn't a full-blown farewell, apparently?
[Incredulously]: I can't even spell 'retirement'. I will still play individual shows, but no more tours. With my Christmas shows, which I've done since I reunited the band 33 years ago, I will use larger venues – just fewer of them. I still have a joy of discovering venues I've never played before and the love of playing has never left me, but what I dislike is the travelling. I'm a bit like Mick Jagger… this is what I do best. Jagger fronts the Stones, I play lead guitar for Slade.

[Going off at a tangent]: Let me show you something. I've still got my 'Dad's Guitar'. [Hill suddenly wanders away from the screen mid-interview, finds a photo of himself playing said iconic guitar during the 70s, and then holds up the instrument proudly]. My dad bought me this for me in 1966, hence the name. Chas Chandler told me, 'Dave, you need to get a decent guitar' and when Chas says that, well… he was the manager of Jimi Hendrix. You listen. I played this guitar on every one of the Number One records that we had.

For someone who hasn't seen your version of Slade live, can you set the scene?
In my show we don't miss a trick. Because we've got so many Number Ones, we play the lot of them. This time we're going to be doing *How Does It Feel?* from our successful film [*Slade In Flame*] which was recently re-released. Nod [Noddy Holder] and I hadn't seen it since the seventies. That film has a lot of truth in it, by the way. Hence I get all of the women. There was no acting required in that. When we arrived at the preview event in London I felt like Tom Cruise, and I'm nearly eighty. We were like The Beatles. We were very happy that [leading cinema critic] Mark Kermode called *Slade In Flame* the *Citizen Kane* of British pop music. That'll do for me.

Did you keep any of the outrageous outfits you wore in Slade's heyday?
You'd think that I would have, but I didn't. [Changing tack again]: I'm sure you know the story of the Superyob?

Your nickname from the seventies?
Yeah. That came from our publicist Keith Altham who saw my car with the registration YOB1. I hadn't even noticed that when I bought it. But I was a superstar so he started calling me Superyob. I had that name on a silver guitar that looked like a ray gun. I didn't like playing it, but it looked great. I used it on *Top Of The Pops* for *Cum On Feel The Noize*, I think.

You regularly socialise with Noddy. Are you still close to bassist Jim Lea and drummer Don Powell?
No, I don't see them at all. Everyone's getting on with their lives, but it's a shame.

Do you have any regrets?
There isn't anything I would change. We brought pleasure to millions across the world. Two days ago, I stood in front of 20,000 people in Prague and people of all ages sang the songs back at me. That's as good as it gets.

And will you miss being on the road?
Well, I've a plan for that. [Status Quo's] Francis Rossi goes out as 'An Audience With'. I can tell the stories and play the songs but it doesn't have to be the full monty of a rock show. Next year I turn 80 and will release a solo album produced by Django Holder, Nod's very talented son. I'm an entertainer and I never want to give that up. **DL**

The tour begins in Hastings on November 28.

Tour Dates

10cc

York	Barbican	Mar 4
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Mar 5
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 6
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 7
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Mar 9
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 10
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 12
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Mar 13
Plymouth	Pavilions	Mar 14
Oxford	New Theatre	Mar 16
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 17
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 20
Swansea	Building Society Arena	Mar 21
Woking	Theatre	Mar 22
Bristol	Beacon	Mar 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Mar 25
Ipswich	Regent	Mar 26
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Mar 28
Cardiff	New Theatre	Jun 29
Brighton	Dome	Jun 30
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jul 1

Recommended

BRYAN ADAMS

Hull	Connexin Live	Dec 8
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Dec 9
Brighton	Centre	Dec 10

AIRBOURNE

Nottingham	Rock City	Jan 30
Birmingham	Academy	Feb 24
Manchester	Academy	Feb 25
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 28
Norwich	UEA	Mar 2
Southampton	Guildhall	Mar 3

THE ALMIGHTY, WOLFSBANE

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 22
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Barrowland	Ballroom	Nov 30

ALTER BRIDGE, DAUGHTRY, SEVENDUST

Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Feb 25
Manchester	AO Arena	Feb 26
Dublin	3 Arena	Feb 28
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 2
London	O2 Arena	Mar 4
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 5

AMARANTHE, EPICA, CHARLOTTE WESSELS

Bristol	Beacon	Jan 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jan 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 23
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 24

RICHARD ASHCROFT

Manchester	Co-op Live	Nov 8
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Mar 24
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Mar 26
London	O2 Arena	Mar 28
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 31
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 2
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 4
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 6

ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16

ATOMIC ROOSTER

Aberdeen	Drummonds	Feb 19
Paisley	The Bungalow	Feb 20
Kinross	Green Hotel	Feb 21
Barnoldswick	BMAC	Feb 22
London	Putney Half Moon	Feb 23
Folkestone	Speedway	Feb 24
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Feb 26
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Feb 27
Liverpool	Cavern Club	Mar 1
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 12
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 25

ELLES BAILEY

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 19
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 20
Bristol	Electric	Mar 21
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Mar 24
Glasgow	St Luke's	Mar 25
Gateshead	Glasshouse 2	Mar 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Mar 27

BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE

London	Islington Academy	Nov 26
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 27
Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock	Nov 28
Huddersfield	The Parish	Nov 29
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Dec 1
Glasgow	Rum Shack	Dec 2
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Dec 3
Derby	Hairy Dog	Dec 4
Devizes	Corn Exchange	Dec 5

ERIC BIBB, AJAY SRIVASTAV

London	Gt Portand St 229 Club	Jan 5, 6

BIFFY CLYRO, SOFT PLAY, THE ARMED

Belfast	SSE Arena	Jan 9
Dublin	3 Arena	Jan 10
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Jan 12
London	O2 Arena	Jan 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jan 16
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jan 17
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jan 18
Aberdeen	P&J Live	Jan 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jan 21

BIG BIG TRAIN

Southampton	1865	Mar 1

BIG THIEF

London	Brixton Academy	Apr 23-25
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 29
Manchester	Aviva Studios	May 27
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 30

THE BLACK EYED SONS

Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 6
Bridgewater	Cobblestones	Nov 8
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 17
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Dec 18
Crumlin	The Patriot	Dec 19
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 20

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Glasgow	Academy	Dec 11
Manchester	Academy	Dec 12
Leeds	Academy	Dec 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 15
Bristol	Academy	Dec 16
London	Limehouse Troxy	Dec 17

BLACK SPIDERS

Exeter	The Cavern	Feb 12
Cardiff	Fuel	Feb 13
London	Islington The Lexington	Feb 14
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 20
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 21

JOE BONAMASSA

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 6, 7

THE BOOMTOWN RATS

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 7
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Nov 8
York	Barbican	Nov 14
Liverpool	Olympia	Nov 15

BRAVE RIVAL

Whitby	Rocks	Nov 7
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Nov 8
Looe	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5
Bristol	Louisiana	Dec 6
Staines	Thameside Brewery	Dec 7
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Nov 8
Looe	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5
Bristol	Louisiana	Dec 6
Staines	Thameside Taphouse	Dec 7
Leighton Buzzard	Library Theatre	Dec 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Dec 19
Hastings	The Carlisle	Dec 21
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Jan 20
Cambridge	Junction 2	Feb 15
Wimborne	Tivoli	Feb 28

BRITISH LION

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 28
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 29
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 30
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 2
Manchester	Gorilla	Dec 3
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Dec 4
Isle Of Wight	Strings Bar & Venue	Dec 6
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 7
Frome	Cheese And Grain	Dec 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 10
Colchester	Arts Centre	Dec 11
Gravesend	Red Lion	Dec 12
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 13
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Dec 15-19

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

IRON MAIDEN

Run *from* the hills, to Knebworth Park next summer. Fifty years in, and they're still one of the very best live acts you'll see.

Hertfordshire	Knebworth Park	Jul 11

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Bilston	Rob 2	Nov 9
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 10
Glasgow	Slay	Aug 1

BUCKCHERRY, MICHAEL MONROE

Southampton	1865	Feb 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 27
Newcastle	Northumbria Institute	Feb 28
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 3
Torquay	The Foundry	Mar 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 6
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 7
Brighton	Chalk	Mar 8

BURNING WITCHES

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Jan 23
Birmingham	The Asylum	Jan 24
Manchester	Academy 3	Jan 25

BUZZCOCKS

Hertford	Corn Exchange	Nov 29
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 30, Dec 1

DANIEL BYRNE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 21
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Mar 22
Chester	Live Rooms	Mar 24
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 26
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Mar 27
Glasgow	Attic	Mar 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 29
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 1
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 3
Southampton	The Joiners	Apr 4
Bristol	The Exchange	Apr 5
London	Soho Lower Third	Apr 10
Crumlin	The Patriot	Apr 11

DAVID BYRNE

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Mar 2
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Mar 3, 4, 15
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Mar 6, 7
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 9, 10
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 13

BYWATER CALL, DAN PATLANSKY

London	Highbury Garage	Nov 19
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 20
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 21
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 22
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 25
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 26
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 28

CARDIACS

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 11
Manchester	New Century Hall	Mar 12
Glasgow	St Luke's	Mar 13

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Brighton	Preston Park	Jul 31

CLUTCH

Bristol	Beacon	Dec 15
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 17
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 18
Manchester	Academy	Dec 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 20

COLOSSEUM, SOFT MACHINE

London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Nov 27

THE COMMONERS

Southend-on Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 3
Wolverhampton	KK'S Steel Mill	Dec 4
Glasgow	Stereo	Dec 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Dec 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Dec 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 10
Bristol	The Exchange	Dec 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 12
Guildford	Boileroom	Dec 13
Portsmouth	Kola	Dec 14

JOHN CORABI

Belfast	Empire	Feb 12
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Feb 13
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 14
Crumlin	The Patriot	Feb 15

HUGH CORNWELL

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 7
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Nov 8
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 13
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Nov 14
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 15
Brighton	Concorde 2	Nov 16
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Nov 20
Dunfermline	Carnegie Hall	Nov 21
Newcastle	Digital	Nov 22

CROBOT, ASOMVEL

Southampton	1865	Dec 2
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Dec 3
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 4
Nottingham	Old Salutation	Dec 5
London	Islington Academy	Dec 7
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Dec 8
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Dec 9
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Dec 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 11
Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 12
Brighton	Chalk	Dec 14

CROWBAR, LEGIONS OF DOOM, SILVERBURN

Limerick	Dolans	Feb 12
Belfast	Limelight 2	Feb 13
Dublin	Opium	Feb 14
Glasgow	Cathouse	Feb 16
Newcastle	University	Feb 17
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 19
Exeter	Pheonix Arts Centre	Feb 20
Manchester	Rebellion	Feb 21
Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 24
Cardiff	Globe	Feb 25
Portsmouth	Kola	Feb 26
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Feb 27
Preston	Blitz	Feb 28

JOHN MCMURTRIE

THE CURE, MOGWAI, THE TWILIGHT SAD, SLOWDIVE, MORE

Dublin	Marley Park	Jun 26
Belfast	Belsonic	Jun 28
Manchester	Wythenshawe Park	Aug 21
Edinburgh	Summer Sessions	Aug 23

CURVED AIR

London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Nov 13
Gt Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 14
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Nov 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 16
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 20
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 21
Winchester	Arc	Nov 22
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 23

THE DAMNED

London	Wembley Arena	Apr 11

THE DAMN TRUTH, PARKER BARROW

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Nov 12
Leek	Foxlowe Arts	Nov 13
Manchester	Academy	Nov 14
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 15
Galashiels	McArts	Nov 16
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 19
Bedford	Esquires	Nov 20
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 21
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Nov 22
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 23

DARE, CHANTEL McGREGOR

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 14

DEF LEPPARD, EXTREME

Belfast	Belsonic	Jun 26
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 28
Sheffield	Utilita Arena	Jun 30
London	02 Arena	Jul 2
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Jul 04
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 6

DEFTONES, DENZEL CURRY, DRUG CHURCH

Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Feb 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 13
Manchester	Co-op Live	Feb 14
Dublin	3 Arena	Feb 16
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Feb 18
London	02 Arena	Feb 20

BOB DYLAN

Brighton	Centre	Nov 7
Swansea	Building Society Arena	Nov 9, 10, 11, 13
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 4
Glasgow	Armadillo	Nov 16, 17
Belfast	Waterfront	Nov 19, 10
Killarney	INEC	Nov 23, 24
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25

ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN

Norwich	UEA	Mar 4
Warrington	Parr Hall	Mar 6
Leeds	Academy	Mar 7
Manchester	Albert Hall	Mar 11
Bristol	Beacon	Mar 13
Brighton	Centre	Mar 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 18
Liverpool	Empire Theatre	Mar 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 25
Bournemouth	Academy	Mar 27
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 1
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 3
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 4

TOMMY EMMANUEL

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Jan 16
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Jan 17
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Jan 18
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Jan 20
Birmingham	Town Hall	Jan 21
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Jan 22
London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Jan 23, 24

EPICA, AMARANTHE, CHARLOTTE WESSELS' THE OBSESSION

Bristol	Bristol Beacon	Jan 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jan 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 23
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 24

SAMANTHA FISH

York	Barbican	Feb 27
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 28
Bristol	Academy	Mar 1
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 3
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 4
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Mar 5
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 6
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 7

FOCUS

Southport	Atkinson	Nov 7
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 8, 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 10
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Nov 11
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 12
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Nov 13
Southampton	1865	Nov 20
Chichester	Council House	Nov 21
Wimborne	Tivoli	Nov 22
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 24
Lowdham	Village Hall	Nov 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 26
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 27
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 28
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 30

FOGHAT

Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 15
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 18

ROBBEN FORD, LAURA EVANS

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Nov 25
Bath	Komedia	Nov 26
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 27
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jan 14, 15

Recommended

FOREIGNER

Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 18
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 19

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

FURY

Sheffield	Aonia Fest	Nov 15
London	Camden Black Heart	Dec 17
Bristol	Exchange	Dec 18
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Dec 19

GONG

Margate	Dreamland	Nov 7
Bedford	Esquires	Nov 8
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 11
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 12
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 13
Lyme Regis	Marine Theatre	Nov 14
Guildford	Boiler Room	Nov 15
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Nov 16
Sheffield	Crokes Social Club	Nov 19
Leeds	Irish Centre	Nov 20
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 21
Lancaster	Kanteena	Nov 22
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 23
Norwich	Arts Centre	Nov 25
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 28
Hitchin	Club 85	Nov 29
London	Hackey Earth	Nov 30

STEVE HACKETT

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 2
Ipswich	Regent	Oct 3
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Oct 4
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 6
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 7
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 9
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 10
Aylesbury	Friars Waterside	Oct 11
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 14
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 16
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 18
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 20
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 21
York	Barbican	Oct 23
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 24
London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 26

HALESTORM, BLOODYWOOD, KELSY KARTER & THE HEROINES

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 21
Birmingham	bp pulse LIVE	Nov 23
Manchester	Arena	Nov 24
London	O2 Arena	Nov 26

HARDLINE

Nottingham	Saltbox	Nov 14
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 15
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 18
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 20
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 21
Manchester	Bread Shred	Nov 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 27
Troon	WinterStorm Festival	Nov 29
Newcastle	Digital	Nov 30

JUSTIN HAWKINS RIDES AGAIN... AGAIN!

Swindon	Wyvern	Jan 12
Cardiff	New Theatre	Jan 13

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

10cc

There's much more than the gold-plated hits to this great song band of the 70s. Catch some pop-rock class.

See previous page for dates. Currently March 4 to July 1.

BARRY BRECHEISEN/GETTY IMAGES

Chester	Storyhouse	Jan 14
Ilkley	Kings Hall	Jan 16
Manchester	RNCM	Jan 17
Warrington	Parr Hall	Jan 18
Sunderland	Fire Station	Jan 20
Aberdeen	Tivoli Theatre	Jan 21
Glasgow	Clyde Rooms	Jan 23
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Jan 24
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Jan 25
Buxton	Opera House	Jan 27
Crewe	Lyceum	Jan 28
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Jan 29
Watford	Colosseum	Jan 31
Southend-on-Sea	Palace Theatre	Feb 1
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Feb 3
Wimborne	Tivoli	Feb 4
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 6
London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Feb 7

HAWKLORDS

Nottingham	Rose Of England	Nov 8
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Nov 9
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 11
Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog	Nov 13
Cambridge	66 Bar	Nov 14
Hull	New Adelphi	Nov 16
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 17
Glasgow	Audio	Nov 18
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 19
Skipton	Sound Bar	Nov 20
Norwich	Brickmakers	Nov 21

HEADSPACE

Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 13
Leicester	The International	Nov 14
East Sussex	Trading Boundaries	Nov 15

HIGH ON FIRE

Manchester	Damnation Festival	Nov 8

THE HIVES

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 25
Manchester	Aviva Studios	Nov 28
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 29

TREVOR HORN & HIS BAND

Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 20

ICE NINE KILLS, CREEPER, THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Manchester	Co-op Live	Dec 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 9
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 10
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 12

IRON MAIDEN, THE DARKNESS, THE HU, MORE

Hertfordshire	Knebworth Park	Jul 11

JETHRO TULL

Perth	Concert Hall	Apr 19
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 20
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 22
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 23
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Apr 25
Salford	The Lowry	Apr 26
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Apr 28
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 29
Hanley	Victoria Hall	May 2
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 3
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 5
London	Palladium	May 6
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May
Swansea	Brangwyn Hall	May 9
Bristol	Beacon Theatre	May 10
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	May 12
Bournemouth	Pavilion	May 13
Southampton	Guildhall	May 15
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	May 16

JINGER, UNPROCESSED, TEXTURES

Glasgow	SWG3	Jan 27
Dublin	Olympia	Jan 28
Manchester	The Ritz	Jan 29
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 30
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jan 31

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Herne Bay	King's Hall	Apr 14
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Apr 15
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 16
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 18
Southampton	The Brook	Apr 19

KRAFTWERK

Dublin	Bord Gais Energy Theatre	May 17
Belfast	Waterfront Hall	May 18
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	May 21
Manchester	Apollo	May 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 25
Stockton-on-Tees	The Globe	May 27
Sheffield	City Hall	May 29
Brighton	Centre	May 30
Bristol	Beacon	Jun 1
Bournemouth	BIC	Jun 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 4, 5
Liverpool	Empire	Jun 7
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 8
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Jun 9

LAURENCE JONES (UNPLUGGED)

London	Holborn Pizza Express	Jan 23
Poynton	Blue Funk Blues Club	Jan 25
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jan 31
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 6
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Feb 7
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Feb 15
Bridport	Arts Centre	Feb 21
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Feb 26
Aldershot	West End Centre	Mar 27
New Milton	Forest Arts Centre	Mar 28
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Apr 10
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 11
Coulsdon	Tuesday Night Music Club	Apr 14
Ripley	Town Hall	Apr 18
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 23
Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 26
Totnes	The Barrel House	May 8
Truro	Old Bakery Studios	May 9
York	Fulford Arms	May 15
Market Rasen	Hope Tavern	May 17
Leamington Spa	Temperance	May 22, 23
Winchester	The ARC	May 29
Cardiff	Acapella Studio	May 31
Ramsgate	Red Arrow Music Club	Jun 9
Diseworth	Blues Club	Jul 24

KING KING, LITTLE ODETTA

London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jan 9, 10

JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 9
London	Rayes Park Cavern	Nov 12
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Nov 16
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Nov 17

KREATOR, CARCASS, EXODUS, NAILS

London	Brixton Academy	Mar 27
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 28
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 29

KULA SHAKER

Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 7
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 8
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Feb 9
Glasgow	Old Fruitmarket	Feb 11
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 12
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 13

LACUNA COIL, NONPOINT

Southampton	1865	Nov 22
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 23
Leeds	Stylus	Nov 25
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 28
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 29

TOBY LEE

York	The Crescent	Nov 12
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Nov 13
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Nov 14
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Nov 15

LORD OF THE LOST

Bristol	Prospect Building	Nov 7
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 8
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 9

SOPHIE LLOYD

Trecco Bay	Winter's End Festival	Jan 29
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jan 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jan 31

DOM MARTIN, BLUE NATION

Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 15
York	Crescents Arts	Nov 16
Manchester	Carole Nash Hall	Nov 17
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 18
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 20
Teignmouth	Pavilions	Nov 21
Fleet	The Harlington	Nov 22
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 25
Liverpool	The Cavern	Nov 26
Belfast	Black Box	Nov 28

MASON HILL

London	Camden Assembly	Nov 27
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 29

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Leighton Buzzard	Library Theatre	Nov 7
Bitmingham	Joe Joe Jims	Nov 8
Lincoln	Southside	Nov 20
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts	Nov 22
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Dec 7
York	Fulford Arms	Dec 8
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 14
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Dec 21
Ramsgate	Red Arrow Music Club	Jan 20
Halifax	Grayston Unity	Jan 29
Trecco Bay	Winter's End Festival	Jan 30
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Feb 6
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 13
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Feb 15
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Mar 27
South Petherton	David Hall	Apr 11
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Apr 17

MIDNITE CITY, WILDSTREET

Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 26
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Nov 27
London	Camden Black Heart	Nov 28
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Nov 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 30

JOHN MITCHELL

London	Camden Dingwalls	Dec 18

MOON SAFARI

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Nov 23

MOSTLY AUTUMN

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 21
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 12
York	The Crescent	Dec 14
Southampton	1865	Dec 17
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 21

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

Manchester	Aviva Studios	Nov 24
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 27

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

Liverpool	Anfield Stadium	Jun 30
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jul 4
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 8, 10, 11, 15

JARED JAMES NICHOLS, AFRODIZIAC

Southampton	1865	Nov 26
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 29
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 30
Bristol	Thekla	Dec 1
Glasgow	G2	Dec 2
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 4
Brighton	Volks	Dec 5
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 6

GARY NUMAN

Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 12
Leeds	Academy	Nov 14
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 15
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 16
Cardiff	University	Nov 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 21
Brighton	Centre	Nov 22
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Nov 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 25
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 26
Norwich	UEA	Nov 27
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 29
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 30

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 21
Bradford	Live	Nov 27
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 28
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 30
Derby	Vaillant Live	Dec 1
Swansea	Building Society Arena	Dec 3
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Dec 4
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 5
Plymouth	Pavilions	Dec 7
Brighton	Centre	Dec 8
London	O2 Arena	Dec 9
Bristol	Prospect Building	Dec 11
Birmingham	bp pulse LIVE	Dec 12

THE OFFSPRING, SIMPLE PLAN

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 10
London	O2 Arena	Nov 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Nov 15
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 18

OPETH

Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 1

ORANGE GOBLIN, GRAND MAGUS, URNE

Glasgow	Garage	Dec 10
Dublin	Button Factory	Dec 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 13
Bristol	SWX	Dec 14
Southampton	1865	Dec 16
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 17

ORIANTHI

Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jan 24
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Jan 25
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jan 28
London	Islington Academy	Jan 29
Trecco Bay	Winter's End Festival	Jan 31
Southampton	The Brook	Feb 1

PIXIES

York	Barbican	May 20
Dunfermline	Alhambra Theatre	May 21
Manchester	Aviva Studios	May 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 28
Limerick	Live At The Castle	May 31
Dublin	Olympia	Jun 2

ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Dec 8
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Dec 9
London	Royal Festival Hall	Dec 11
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Dec 14
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Dec 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Dec 18
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Dec 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 22
York	Barbican	Dec 23

POWERWOLF, HAMMERFALL, WIND ROSE

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 7

PREACHER STONE, REVENANT

Faversham	Old Brewery	Jan 28
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Jan 29
Winchester	Railway Inn	Jan 30
St Austell	Band Club	Jan 31
Trecco Bay	Planet Rock Winter's End	Feb 1
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 3
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Feb 4
Newcastle	Trillians	Feb 5
Nottingham	Old Cold Store	Feb 6
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Feb 7
Bristol	Louisiana	Feb 8

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

RADIOHEAD

Five-times platinum in the UK, and precious metal worldwide – and that's just one album. And live? Prepare to be amazed.

London	O2 Arena	Nov 21, 22, 24, 25

THE PRODIGY

Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 15
Manchester	Co-op Live	Apr 16
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 18
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Apr 19
Bournemouth	BIC	Apr 21
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 22
London	Wembley Arena	Apr 24, 25
Belfast	SSE Arena	Apr 27
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 28

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London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 27
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 28
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Dec 29
Swindon	MECA	Jan 3
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jan 4
Cambridge	Junction	Jan 6
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Jan 7
Coventry	Empire	Jan 10

SUZI QUATRO

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 7
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Apr 8
Manchester	Opera House	Apr 9
Watford	Colosseum	Apr 11
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 12
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 14
London	Palladium	Apr 15
Bath	Forum	Apr 17
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 19
Bournemouth	BIC	Apr 20

THE QUIREBOYS, SOHO DUKES

Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Nov 27
Wakefield	Venue 23	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 29
Nottingham	Saltbox	Nov 30
Newcastle	Digital	Dec 3
Glasgow	Classic Grand Ballroom	Dec 4
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Dec 5

RADIOHEAD

London	O2 Arena	Nov 21, 22, 24, 25

RAGING SPEEDHORN, MASTIFF

Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 20
Bournemouth	The Anvil	Nov 22
London	Camden Black Heart	Nov 22, 23
Manchester	Star & Garter	Nov 28
Edinburgh	Mash House	Nov 29
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 30

THE RASMUS

Glasgow	Galvanizers	Nov 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 1
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 4
Southampton	1865	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6

THE RAVEN AGE, EMPYRE

Southampton	1865	Nov 25
Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 26
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 28
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 30

ROXETTE

London	Wembley Arena	Dec 1

ROYAL REPUBLIC

Leeds	Stylus	Nov 7
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 9
Bristol	Electric	Feb 12
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 14

SABATON

London	O2 Arena	Dec 4
Manchester	Co-op Live	Dec 5
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 6

SAXON, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
Sheffield	Octagon	Nov 8
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 9
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 11
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 13
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 16

Recommended

PHILIP SAYCE, TOM MORIARTY

Bristol	The Fleece	May 19
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 20
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 22
Glasgow	St Luke's	May 23
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	May 24
Basingstoke	The Haymarket	May 27
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	May 28
Chester	Live Rooms	May 30
Cardiff	The Globe	May 31
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jun 3

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

THE SKIDS

Southampton	1865	Jan 16
Cambridge	Junction	Jan 17
Bath	Komedia	Jan 23
Birmingham	The Crossing	Jan 24
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jan 30
Brighton	Chalk	Jan 31
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 28
Cardiff	Y Plas	Apr 17
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Apr 18
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 24
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Apr 25

SKINDRED, THE DETOUR

Torquay	Arena	Nov 7
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 8
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Nov 14

SKINNY LISTER

Southampton	1865	Dec 3
Bristol	The Fleece	Dec 4
Leicester	Academy 2	Dec 5

KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

LIVE!

Norwich	Arts Centre	Dec 6
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 7
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 9
Sunderland	Independent	Dec 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Dec 11
London	King's Cross Scala	Dec 12

DAVE HILL'S SLADE, SONS OF THE SEVENTIES

Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Nov 28
Margate	Dreamland	Nov 29
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 10
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 12
Bournemouth	Academy	Dec 14
Oxford	Academy	Dec 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 17
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 19
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 22

Recommended

SMITH, KOTZEN

Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 13
Glasgow	SWG3	Feb 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 17
Southampton	1865	Feb 18
Bristol	Academy	Feb 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 21

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

SOUTHERN RIVER BAND

Manchester	Gorilla	Feb 10
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Feb 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 13
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Feb 14
London	King's Cross Scala	Feb 15

SPIKE FROM THE QUIREBOYS

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Dec 12

STEELEYE SPAN

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 16
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 17
Blyth	Phoenix Theatre	Nov 19
Morecambe	Platform	Nov 20
Preston	Playhouse	Nov 21
Liverpool	Tung Auditorium	Nov 23
Barnard Castle	Witham	Nov 24
Ilkley	King's Hall	Nov 25
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Nov 26
Wantage	The Beacon	Nov 29
Abergavenny	Borough Theatre	Dec 1
Bristol	St George's Hall	Dec 2
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 3
Farnham	Malting	Dec 4
Isle Of Wight	Medina Theatre	Dec 6
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Dec 8
Basingstoke	Haymarket	Dec 9
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Dec 10
Felixstowe	Spa Pavilion	Dec 11
Ashford	Revelation	Dec 13
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 15
Leicester	Y Theatre	Dec 16
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Dec 17
London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Dec 19

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 10
Leeds	Academy	Mar 12
Manchester	Academy	Mar 13
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 14
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 16, 17
Bristol	Academy	Mar 19
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 20
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 21

ROINE STOLT & FRIENDS PLAY THE FLOWER KINGS

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 9
Manchester	Club Academy	Dec 10

STRAY

Chelmsford	Hot Box	Nov 23
Ramsgate	Red Arrow Club	Nov 27
Hastings	The Carlisle	Nov 28

SWANS

Leeds	Project House	Nov 7
London	Brixton Electric	Nov 9, 10

SWEET

Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 4
Torquay	Arena	Dec 5
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 6
Northampton	Roadmender	Dec 11
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 12
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 15
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Dec 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 18
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Dec 19
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Dec 20

SYSTEM OF A DOWN, QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, ACID BATH

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jul 13, 15

TARJA

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 16

TEN YEARS AFTER, JOHN VERITY

London	Gr Portland St 229 Club	Jan 21

THESE WICKED RIVERS, VIRGINMARYS

Newport	The Patriot	Nov 15
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 15
Cambridge	Storey's Field Centre	Nov 20
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Nov 21
Cheltenham	Steam & Whistle	Nov 22
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 23
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 28
Hull	The Welly	Nov 29
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 30

THREE DAYS GRACE

Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 10
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 12
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 13

THRICE

Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 13
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 14
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 17
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 18
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 19

MIKE TRAMP'S WHITE LION

Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hall	Nov 7
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 8
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 10

JEFF TWEEDY

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 20, 21

TYLA'S DOGS D'AMOUR

Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 19
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 3
Preston	Vinyl Tap	Oct 4
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Nov 13
Gravesend	Red Lion	Nov 14
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Nov 15

TWIN ATLANTIC

Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 4
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 5

THE UNDERTONES

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Dec 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 5
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 6

VOLBEAT, BUSH, GEL

Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 8
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 10
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 12
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 13

WEDNESDAY 13

Newcastle	Digital	Nov 7
Glasgow	Slay	Nov 8
Hull	Asylum	Nov 9

WHEATUS

Dublin	Academy	Nov 22
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 23
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 25
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 26
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 28
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 29
Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 30
Sheffield	Leadmill	Dec 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 2, 3
Oxford	Academy	Dec 5
Brighton	Chalk	Dec 6
Southampton	1865	Dec 7
Norwich	Epic Studios	Dec 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 10
Bristol	Electric	Dec 11
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 12
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 13

WHEN RIVERS MEET, GEORGIA NEVADA

Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Nov 7
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Nov 8
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 22
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 27
Bury St Emunds	Apex	Nov 28

WILL WILDE

Northampton	Picturedrome	Nov 13
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 17
Southampton	Hanger Farm Arts	Nov 20
Reading	The Butler	Nov 21

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

WINTERSTORM FESTIVAL

British Lion (pictured), Ugly Kid Joe, Hardline, Sweet and more blow away some winter blues and bring some rock sunshine.

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 27-29

KEVIN NIXON

Luton	Bear Club	Dec 2
Portsmouth	Lens Studio	Mar 1
Hastings	The Carlisle	Mar 6

THE WILDHEARTS

Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 4
Preston	Blitz	Dec 5
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Dec 6
Torquay	Arena	Dec 7
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 9
Brighton	Chalk	Dec 10
London	Islington Academy	Dec 11
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 14
Newcastle	NX	Dec 16

TONY WRIGHT

Gateshead	Central Bar	Dec 4
Newcastle Under Lyme	Rigger	Dec 5
Cheltenham	Steam & Whistle	Dec 6
Durham	Old Cinema Laundrette	Dec 7
Skipton	Sound Bar	Dec 11
Kidderminster	Bear & Wolf	Dec 18
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Dec 19
Southampton	Suburbia	Dec 20
London	Southwark Golden Hinde	Dec 21

YES

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 22
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 24
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Apr 25
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 27
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Apr 28
Bristol	Beacon	Apr 30
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 1
London	Palladium	May 3, 4

YOUNG GUN SILVER FOX

Worthing	Factory Live	Nov 6
Margate	Olbys	Nov 7
Southampton	Papillon	Nov 8

Festivals

ALTER BRIDGE'S BLACKBIRD FESTIVAL

ALTER BRIDGE, SKINDRED, FLORENCE BLACK, CARDINAL BLACK

Cardiff Castle Jun 27

BLOODSTOCK

JUDAS PRIEST, SAXON, BLACK LABEL SOCIETY, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 6-9

BLOODSTOCK'S WINTER GATHERING

CANDLEMASS, VENOM INC, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 6

CALL OF THE WILD

ONSLAUGHT, WOLFSBANE, KING KRAKEN, MORE

Lincoln	Showground	May 28-31

COUNTRY 2 COUNTRY

KEITH URBAN, BROOKS & DUNN, ZACH TOP

London	O2 Arena	Mar 13-15
Belfast	SSE Arena	Mar 13-15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 13-15

DEDICATION TO PHIL LYNOTT

ERIC BELL, DARREN WHARTON, RICKY WARWICK, GRAND SLAM, MORE

Dublin	3 Arena	Jan 4

DESERTFEST

GREEN LUNG, HERMANO, THE SWORD, MORE

London	Camden various venues	May 15-17

DESTINATION

H.E.A.T, CHEZ KANE, EMPYRE, MORE

Sheffield	Forge Warehouse	Sep 12

FIREVOLT

RICKY WARWICK, FM, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 7-9

HARD ROCK HELL PROG

ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT, FOCUS, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 13-16

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE

BULLETBOYS, ENUFF Z'NUFF, LOVE/HATE, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 4-6

MAYHEM ROCK FESTIVAL

H.E.A.T, ECLIPSE, CONFESS, MORE

Nottingham	The Nest	May 16
London	Camden Koko	May 17

NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL

COLOSSEUM, FM, CORKY LAING'S MOUNTAIN, MORE

Lincolnshire	Grimsthorpe Castle	Sep 3-6

PLANET ROCK WINTER'S END

SOPHIE LLOYD, GUN, TYKETTO, ORIANTHI, MORE

Trecco Bay	Holiday Park	Jan 29-Feb 1

ROXOFF

WOLFSBANE, MARISSA & THE MOTHS, JULIET'S NOT DEAD, MORE

Norwich	Waterfront Studios	May 3

SLAM DUNK

GOOD CHARLOTTE, TAKING BACK SUNDAY, 'A', MORE

Hatfield	Park	May 23
Leeds	Temple Newsam	May 24

STONEDEAD

MAGNUM, EUROPE, THE DAMN TRUTH, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 29

UK BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL

CLIMAX BLUES BAND, BRAVE RIVAL, DEBORAH BONHAM, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Jan 30-Feb 1

WINTERSTORM

BRITISH LION, UGLY KID JOE, HARDLINE, SWEET, THESE WICKED RIVERS, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 27-29

Roy Harper

London Palladium

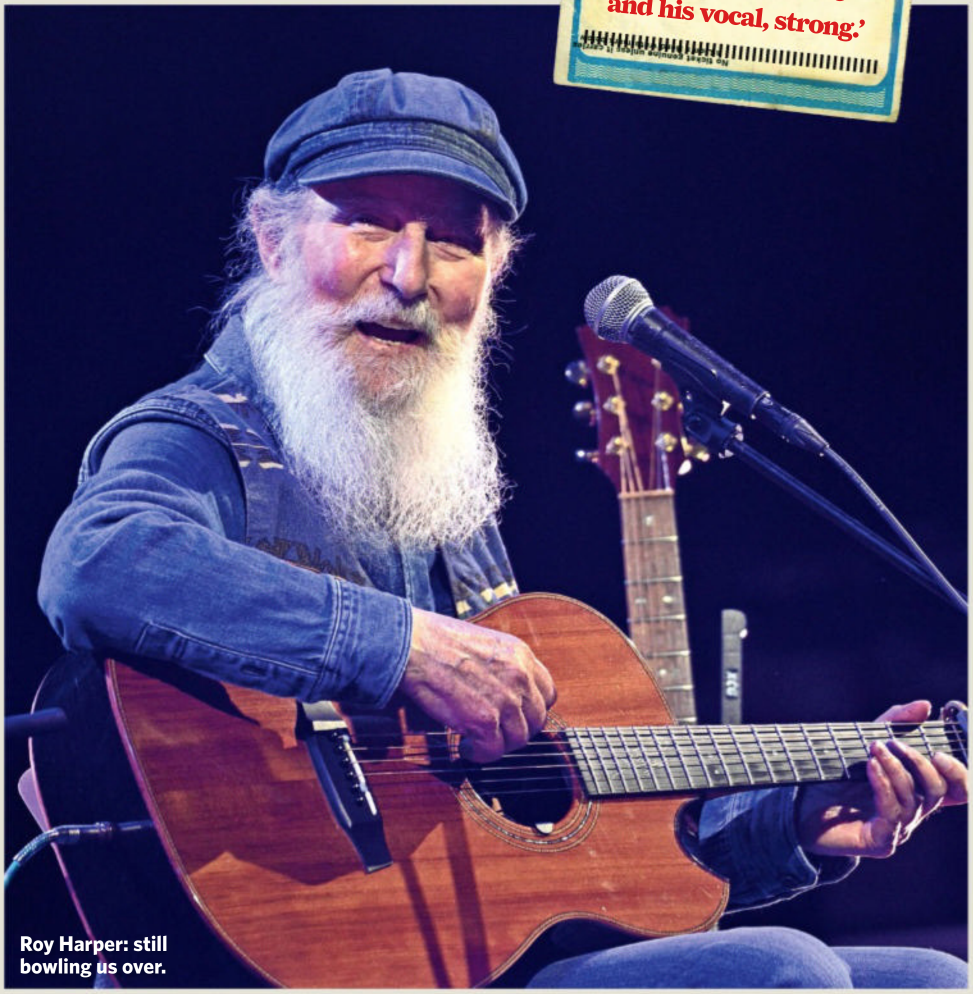
Hats off to Rusholme's folk-poet extraordinaire.

"How the fuck did you get to be eighty-four?" shouts a punter. "That's a very good question…" Roy Harper replies, twinkling with cheek and charm, seated solo with his guitar in this sold-out grand theatre. Tonight's gig has all the informality of playing in front of mates at Les Cousins or at myriad rowdy shows and festivals, the boisterous audience participation as much a trademark as Harper's own addresses.

How Does It Feel is a fiery start, and a deep cut from 1970's *Flat Baroque And Beserk*. His fingerstyle is deft and assertive, his vocal strong, with just the merest senior wobble. Mildly irritated by a rogue eighth fret and a misbehaving echo pedal, his two-hour set tackles truth-to-power gems such as *Hors D'Oeuvres* and poignant, memory-laden showstoppers such as *Twelve Hour Sunset* and *Old Cricketer*, The audience yell for "*White Man*!" and Harper obliges: "[the kind of] song my grandchildren might never get to hear".

A special guest is billed. Jimmy Page watches from the Royal Box as Nick Harper joins his dad, adding even more warmth, humour and musical attack; *The Same Old Rock* enters another psychedelic dimension. Harper dedicates *Forever* to Nick's late mum Mocy, speaks of making a new album, and plays a touching new song, *I Loved My Life*. Eighty-four and still bowling us over.

Jo Kendall



Roy Harper: still bowling us over.

'His fingerstyle is deft and assertive and his vocal, strong.'

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

Feeder

London Brixton Academy

Emotional return to shared sonic catharsis.

What's the saying, time heals all wounds? Maybe not all, given the range of emotions washing around in Brixton Academy tonight. Twenty-three years of *Comfort In Sound* hasn't diminished its unnerving power or the starkness of a record written in response to the death of Feeder drummer Jon Lee by suicide. Tonight those wounds feel as fresh as that fateful year when the news of his passing in Florida crept slowly around the world.

His original replacement, Skunk Anansie drummer Mark Richardson, makes a surprise appearance, to an uproarious response, for an elongated encore/second half to play on *Feeling A Moment* and *Pushing The Senses*, but it's the opening half with the original *Comfort* album played in full that really galvanises and then undoes the sell-out crowd. They're recording for a live album, so slight stumbles on *Child In You* and *Summer's Gone* sees both songs started again, but there's so much goodwill and love in the room that no one really cares. It's the dizzying highs evident in songs like the brilliant *Just The Way I'm Feeling* and the confounding lows of the elegiac like *Quick Fade* that leaves Brixton dumbstruck. There's lovingly rendered artwork on the all-enveloping back screen, and then the final image of Lee standing in the bright sunshine, eyes shaded by his hat, as *Moonshine* plays out and before everything fades to black.

Philip Wilding

Edwyn Collins

London Royal Festival Hall

Stellar swansong simply thrills.

'This is the sound of happiness', concludes Orange Juice anthem *Felicity*, yet as this is Collins's "testimonial" tour there is both joy and melancholy in the room. Above all there's much love for the 66-year-old Scot, who heroically hauled himself back into action after two cerebral haemorrhages in 2005.

A huge backdrop of lights spells out 'EDWYN' in ELVIS-style font, and we just can't help believing. Walking on with his trusty cane, then mostly seated, he's still a mischievous raconteur, whose trademark baritone steers some of the most eccentric yet influential songs in the post-punk canon. Whether it's the jangle-pop of *Intuition*, the parping funk of *Rip It Up* or the warm country-rock from latest album *Nation Shall Speak Unto Nation*, the show revels in quirks and charm. Subsequently, the grit of *What Presence* and the sweet soul of *In A Nutshell* also bring the roof down.

His terrific band welcome a kind of *This Is Your Life* guest list, from Paul Cook (driving the drums hard on a glorious *A Girl Like You*) to Dennis Bovell, from Vic Godard to original Juicers James Kirk and Steven Daly.

"This is the future, old man", Edwyn Collins once told John Peel, accosting him outside the BBC with his debut single. All this falling and laughing later, he leaves the stage as a beloved braveheart.

Chris Roberts

Gyasi

London The Lexington

US glam rockers get it on at UK debut.

Probably best known to the wider rock world for stepping into the late Glen Buxton's boots for this year's *The Revenge Of Alice Cooper* album, singer-guitarist Gyasi Heus tonight puts on his own stack heels with his self-titled band to party like it's 1973 for their British live debut in the snug environs of this North London mainstay. Sporting Mick Ronson's Ziggy-era mane and playing chops, Bowie's *Life On Mars?* make-up and Iggy's sinewy swagger and physique, Gyasi doesn't so much reinvent the wheel as give it a diamond-studded hubcap. This is homage, not pastiche.

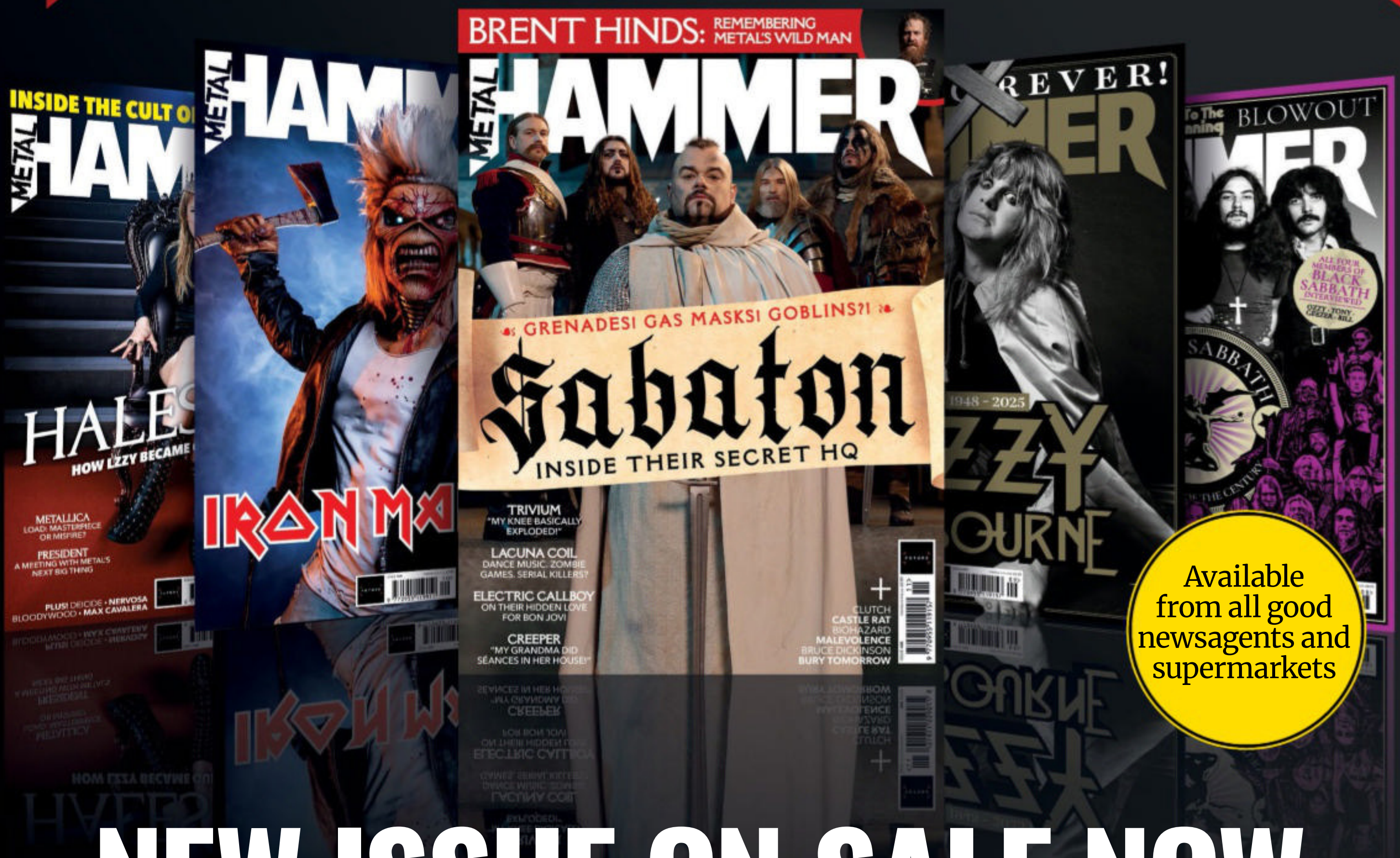
Sure, there are moments when they teeter dangerously close to simply becoming a Bowie tribute band – hell, there's even a song called *Sweet Thing* – but when they flex their muscles to kick out the jams the sparkle is all their own. The one-two punch of *Lightening* and *Kiss Kiss* is a rock'n'roll joy as the former's air-punching chorus and the latter's grinding shuffle bypass the brain to hit straight below the neck. The terrace-stomping *Tongue Tied* can't help but provoke grins and footwork, while *Fast Love*, brushed with a sweep of Bolan boogie, sees Gyasi and guitarist foil Ricky Dover Jr trading twin leads with guitars held behind their heads.

Sexy, stoopid and gloriously salacious, Gyasi are pure glam flash – and an absolute scream.

Julian Marszalek

THE UK'S BIGGEST HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE

METAL HAMMER


BRENT HINDS: REMEMBERING METAL'S WILD MAN
METAL HAMMER
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TRIVIUM "MY KNEE BASICALLY EXPLODED!"
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Patti Smith

London Palladium

Art punk pioneer triumphantly turns back time.

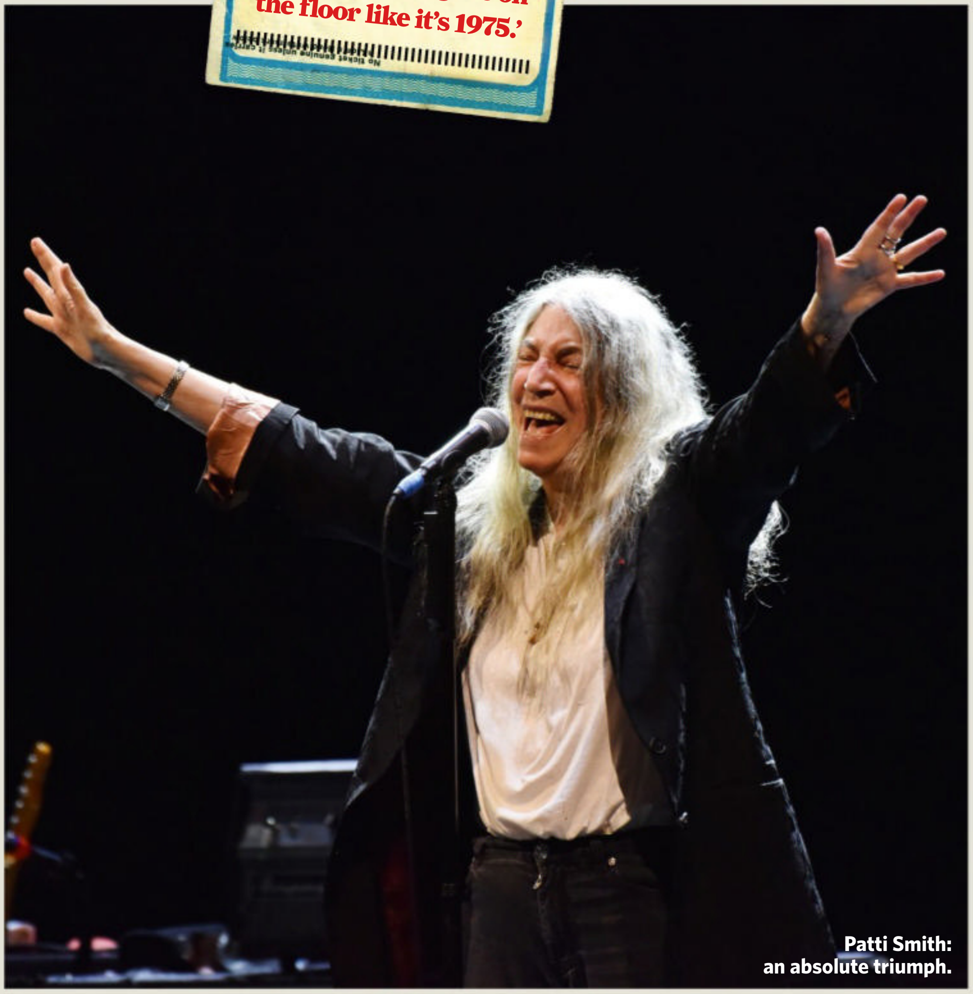
★ When Patti Smith is on her A-game, she makes other rock'n'roll performers look like pottery teachers. At 78, celebrating the 50th anniversary of incomparable beatnik pre-punk album *Horses*, tonight she somehow morphs into the 29-year-old she was when making that life-affirming landmark. The white hair matches her group's white heat; she often gobs on the floor like it's 1975.

A show that begins with the feverish adrenaline of *Gloria* never loses momentum from there. The audience, a pleasing mix of ages with a large contingent of women who weren't born when *Dream Of Life* came out, never mind *Horses*, leave feeling 25 floors tall.

Smith's also in fantastic voice, rasping through *Free Money* or handling *Break It Up* with remarkable poise. Lenny Kaye, Jay Dee Daugherty and the band lock in, and a modified *Birdland* which rails at Trump is a tension-and-release master class. In *Land* she ad libs around "half a century" of "Johnny"'s "energy". It's stunning, and the second set can't top it, though it has a bash, with *Dancing Barefoot*, *Because The Night* and the guys jamming a for-the-heads Television medley. This being 2025, there must be controversy, and a pro-Palestine anthem and Johnny Depp joining the *People Have The Power* encore provide that. But the power is all the indefatigable Smith's, still suggesting a sea of possibilities.

Chris Roberts

'White hair matches the white heat; she gobs on the floor like it's 1975.'



Patti Smith: an absolute triumph.

JIM DYSON/GETTY IMAGES

Francis Rossi

Hastings White Rock Theatre

More rabbit than Sainsbury's: the Quo frontman in conversation – and song.

★ He began his career in holiday camps so it seems apt that he continues it in the seaside towns of Britain. Just yards from the pier, in front of an excited, if largely un-youthful audience, two men sit in armchairs. One of them is called Andy Brook and he is largely silent. Which is sensible because the other man is Francis Rossi, and if there were any donkeys in the crowd tonight they would have had to drag themselves home, hind legless. Rossi's stage persona for this show that's part anecdote, part songs is somewhere between a jollier Paul Whitehouse and a pleasant, human version of Jim Davidson: he doesn't tell any stories, actually, he just reveals the contents of his head, some of which involves a running gag about the words "she cried".

It's hilarious, it's intimate and somehow it's the perfect framework for a night of songs that take us from *Pictures Of Matchstick Men* and *Down The Dustpipe*, all the way up to *In The Army Now* and a gorgeous, poignant *Rock'n'Roll*, nearly all of which are performed by Brook and Rossi in their chairs (as is, aptly, *In My Chair*).

Not averse to full-length versions (this is more unhurried than *Unplugged*), Rossi displays Status Quo's gift for melody and riffs throughout the whole show and even stands up for a thunderous singalonga *Caroline*. Epic.

David Quantick

Parkway Drive

Birmingham Utilita Arena

Aussie metalcore veterans fight fire with (even more) fire.

★ When Parkway Drive released *Ire* in 2015, they made their ambitions plain by adopting the trappings of stadium metal with an eye on playing arenas. A decade on, it's impossible to imagine them fitting anywhere else.

Blasts of pyro, concussive explosions and even strapping their drummer into a flaming gyroscope have become well-worn parts of the Parkway live experience. But there's a sense that everything has been amped up for their 20th-anniversary tour. Winston McCall enters the arena like a boxer, followed by a spotlight from the back of the hall as he shakes hands and steps onto a small B-stage where the show begins. 2007's *Carrion* shows Parkway have long harboured anthemic qualities, but the colossal singalong to *Prey* demonstrates just how much of a leap they made over the next decade. When the production kicks in, it reaches a whole new level. Elevating platforms, dancers, jets of flame, a string trio for *Chronos*, and even a waterfall during *Wishing Wells*, lend a sense of scale usually reserved for big-budget pop acts.

It's spectacular and awe-inspiring in equal measure, marking out Parkway Drive as strong contenders for the best live band in metal right now. Even with the upper tier curtained off at the back, those festival headline slots look closer than ever.

Rich Hobson

Luke Morley/Willie Dowling

London Bloomsbury Theatre

Excellent double-shot of old-school Britrock songsmiths.

★ Like falling through a wormhole and finding yourself in the late 80s, Thunder's Luke Morley and The Grip/Honeycrack's Willie Dowling are reunited to promote two solo albums: Morley's *Walking On Water* and Dowling's *The Simpleton*.

Dowling, wry, resigned, regarding the world with a bemused glance, has mutated in into the UK's answer to Randy Newman (without the *Toy Story* cash), with a piano-led album that bristles beautifully live, the quiet snarl of *Long Drop Down*, the jaunty, dark hearted title track and even a straight line back to his song writing roots with a rattling take on The Grip's *Vera Daydream*. Sublime and ridiculously good.

Morley's performed a similarly creative miracle, stepping out of the shadow of Danny Bowes's crackerjack vocals to be taken seriously as a frontman in his own right. By his own admission, getting Thunder back together isn't within his grasp right now, but we do get charged versions of *River Of Pain* and *Like A Satellite* in their stead. His songwriting smarts don't stop there; he admits to writing *Errol Flynn* about his dad, before life overtook him, and he realised it was about himself instead. Equally good is the black humour of *Killed By Cobain* and the gentle, swirling *Breathe*, which is Morley at his songwriter best.

Philip Wilding

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Deep Purple's longest-serving guitarist **Steve Morse** on the records, artists and gigs of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Chris Lord**

It's remarkable that Steve Morse's 28 years with Deep Purple only scratch the surface of his career. Their longest-serving guitarist, Morse stepped away from the hard-rock legends in 2022 to support his wife Janine Morse's battle with cancer. Sadly she passed away in 2024.

It makes sense that Morse's new solo album, *Triangulation*, is a recalibration in more ways than one. Musically it exhibits the uncompromising, genre-fluid brand of rock he's mastered over decades – be it with the Dixie Dregs, Kansas, Flying Colors or by himself. For Morse personally, you could say that this is him figuring things out via the fretboard, traversing everything from jazz to funk to metal, doing what he does best.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

It was church music. As well as studying for his PhD at the local university, my dad was a minister. The sound of a pipe organ is so incredible. The people that wrote chorales and hymns were really good composers. It was nothing like the excitement of hearing The Beatles or something like that, but it made a big impression on me in terms of phrasing, tonality and logical voice leading.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

It was a cowboy song I did for a recital at elementary school. I was about ten and I'd just started learning guitar. I can't remember the title, but it was a three-chord song about cowboys out on the range, and the class sang behind me.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

The Well-Tempered Synthesizer by Walter Carlos [1969, before Carlos transitioned to become Wendy]. With Rachel Elkind [producer], it was a production where they played one note at a time from classical pieces [on a Moog synthesiser]. Wendy went on to do the music for *A Clockwork Orange*, which is more famous than this, but it was awesome to hear this beautifully written music. I would come back from school with all the angst that teenagers have, put this on and just be: "Yeah!"

THE GUITAR HERO

Hendrix was innovative. Eric Clapton made the blues more melodic and appealing. Jimmy Page patented the riff-based song. John McLaughlin made my favourite fusion of rock and jazz. If I had to pick one, I'd say Jeff Beck. As a young kid hearing him play *I Ain't Superstitious* – every phrase was golden.

THE SINGER

Other than Paul McCartney, I think Rod Stewart has stood the test of time. From their early years, you can't find a bad track from either. They all sound amazing. I would give the edge to Rod Stewart because he's a performer, and McCartney's more of a writer. Rod's voice is unbelievable, and to keep that gravelly thing up for so many years.

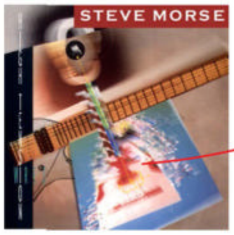
THE SONGWRITER

There was a guy named Lennon-McCartney who wrote a bunch of Beatles tunes! When they worked together it was like the top of the heap. Growing up in my generation, a lot of the solo albums were a disappointment because there wasn't the same interaction. It was two people collaborating in a way that they would listen to each other and respond.

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

THE BEST COVER VERSION

The Allman Brothers' cover of *Don't Want You No More*. The whole lead-up to the double guitars at the end, they improvised parts that became the arrangement. The original blues song is less remarkable to me than the way they did it.



THE BEST RECORD I MADE

I think the one that's the most me is *High Tension Wires*. It was done at a time when I thought I was gonna be an airline pilot for the rest of my life. I thought it's clear that I'll never be on the radio, get a Grammy, so I'll just do what I like. It was very liberating, and that's reflected in the music. I didn't have to think about anyone's feelings or demands or suggestions.

Wendy Carlos
The Well-Tempered Synthesizer

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

It depends how you'd categorise what makes it the worst, but on *Free Fall*, the Dixie Dregs record, we didn't get the sound we wanted. Stuart Levine [producer] was trying for a crisp, clear sound of guys playing in a room, and we wanted a big, fat production that we later got with Ken Scott.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

I think the most underrated musicians are the ones in each town who teach students, play on weekends, practise and come up with ideas every day. Just looking forward to making people happy.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

ABBA. I love their stuff. It's done so perfectly – great writing, great production. Whenever *Dancing Queen* comes on the radio it still sounds incredible.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

A song from my new album, *Taken By An Angel*. The title wouldn't fit me dying, but the music would be appropriate. I had some of it done before [my wife's passing] but added more, then my son [Kevin] played it with me at [Janine's] service. He agreed to do it on the recording, too, and I added some more to describe that long night of realising that was the end. The triumphant part at the end is the transition to another worldly existence. ●

Triangulation is out on November 14 via Music Theories Recordings.

"As a young kid hearing Jeff Beck play *I Ain't Superstitious* – every phrase was golden."

STEVE MORSE: NICK NERSESOV/PRESS; JEFF BECK: CHRISTIAN ROSE/ROGER VIOLLET VIA GETTY IMAGES

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